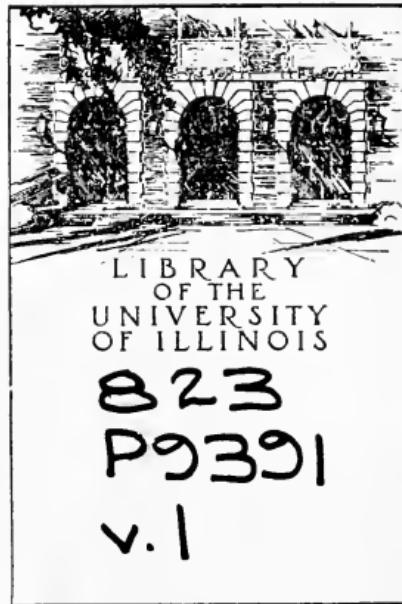


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THE
P R I V A T E E R;

A TALE OF THE SEA,

IN TWO VOLUMES.

O'er the glad waters of the dark blue sea,
Our thoughts as boundless, and our souls as free;
Far as the breeze can bear, the billows foam,
Survey our empire, and behold our home.—BYRON.

VOL. I.

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L O N D O N :
ANDREWS, NEW BOND STREET.

1848.

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THE
P R I V A T E R.

CHAPTER I.

— — — — — And thus it was with us
Like Summer Voyagers on a quiet sea,
We on the deck our varying parlaunce held ;
Or gave the light jest to the passing winde ;
Or on the sunnie billowes careleslie
Gazed as they kist and parted ; or convaide,
In gentle whispers to our Mistresse' eare,
Fond thoughts that Fancie bred of Idlenessse ;
While underneathe the rapid tyde of tyme
Flowed brightelye on to miserable aims
And moste unhearde-of yssues.—*MORIBUNDE Old Poem.*

IT was in the beginning of August when,
with a full tide and favouring breeze, a small
northward-bound vessel dropped down the
river Thames—the morning sun was spark-
ling on the rippled wave ; and, as the many
objects rose and expanded like imagination,

or passed and faded like forgetfulness, the passengers remained on deck, contemplating the land they left, till the waters widened, and the last needle-pointed spire melted into nothing.

There is something particularly interesting in the commencement of a first voyage—in the bustle and activity of the sailors—the fluttering of the canvass—and the fearful heaving of the element to which we commit ourselves; and this observation was fully verified in two of our party; an elderly female, and an interesting young one. As they sat watching a sailor in his progress to the mast-head, the first of these expressed great astonishment at his agility and seeming unconcern. “Suppose,” said she, “he should fall from that almost invisible rope! he would crush us to death!” “My dear Mrs. M‘Kay,” replied the other, in a sweeter

and more feeling tone, “you seem to forget what would be the poor man’s fate.” She did not take her eyes off him till he had safely descended, and the next object which met them was a genteel young man gazing intently upon her. “Mind, Madam,” he said, turning to Mrs. M’Kay, “keep clear of that rope, or you will be hoisted to the station just vacated by our friend with the ragged shirt.”

The lady uttered an exclamation of horror and shifted her seat, but, being presently warned that the boom would carry her overboard, she retreated with all expedition to the cabin, while the gentleman took her place by Miss Grey, which was the name of the younger female. She thought his speech had been rather rude to her aunt, but some civil remarks and endeavours to make himself useful, soon placed him in a more ad-

vantageous light, and a few minutes found them chatting on the most friendly terms.

They had gone on in this manner for some time, when the gentleman calling to another who sat on the opposite side of the vessel in a musing posture, desired to know whence he had been favoured with the amatory composition which he had twisted into so many shapes. The person he addressed looked up and smiled, and, depositing the rumpled paper in his pocket, came towards them. As he advanced, Miss Grey's friend begged leave to introduce him, and, before he had received permission, announced him as Mr. Ardourly. Mr. Ardourly made his bow, and said he believed it would now be his part to perform the agreeable office for his friend which he had just received from him, and introduced him as “a rude and boisterous Captain of the sea—Captain Raleigh.”

“ What have you been saying to the little girl ? ” said Ardourly, as the young lady, rather embarrassed at being introduced by two strangers, readily obeyed a voice which summoned her below.

His friend laughed, and asked where her old grandfather had stowed himself. He had not been seen since they weighed anchor. Ardourly accounted for his absence, having seen him busily employed in putting away a cargo of curiosities ; and was enabled to give something of his history which had been gathered from the Captain of the vessel.

Mr. M’Kay was a naturalist in his dotage. He had come from Scotland on a short visit to London, for the purpose of making additions to his collection of rarities. But the most valuable one he had picked up, by way of ornament to his fire-

side, was a wife, the good lady before introduced, who was now about to make her bridal entré at her new residence, and, having wisely considered the possibility of her making no addition to the family of the M'Kays, had stipulated with the bridegroom for the adoption of her niece.

These, with the two young men, of whom it is time to give a short account, were all the persons of importance now afloat in the “Pride of the Ocean,” by which title the reader will please to recognise, not one of the fine smacks of the present day, but a small dingy cutter, about as clean and commodious as a collier.

Henry Ardourly was one of a large family, and, as this one happened not to be the eldest, his father had thought it as necessary to give him a good education, as to instruct his heir-apparent in the dignity of county

clubs and cock-fighting. Henry did not neglect his opportunities—he had good abilities, and what, in the opinion of his female acquaintance, was better, he had a good figure. These qualifications had, in a visit which he paid two years before to an early friend of his father in Scotland, found such favour with the honest Scot as produced an invitation for Henry to become his companion and successor; neither of which had been left him by his lately deceased wife.

A short time previous to his commencing his Scotch expedition his friend Raleigh returned from sea, and, like many other worthy sons of Neptune, having nothing to do but to bind up his wounds and spend his half-pay, wished for no better amusement than a few weeks' shooting on the muirs. Henry had full permission to take what friends he pleased, and they accordingly set out together.

As they were now alone, Ardourly produced the letter which had excited Raleigh's curiosity.

"Full of darts and smarts of course," said Raleigh, as he opened it—"you are nearer the mark than you suspect, perhaps; but read."

"If Mr. Ardourly values his safety, he will not venture on Scottish ground—he must have received a similar note to this some time since, and he would not have rendered another necessary, if he had been aware of the danger to which it exposed the writer."

"Very extraordinary indeed! can you form no clue to the meaning of this?"
"None."

"It is a very pretty hand—a woman's evidently. Why, what can it be but a half-witted plan of some enamoured fair, to keep you at home? Depend on it, it is the last

resource of desperation. But lo ! the Bridegroom appears!"

As soon as Mr. M'Kay had introduced his time-worn visage, and red worsted night-cap, above the cabin stairs, he was assisted by both the young men. His infirm and shrunk limbs could scarcely drag themselves to the deck ; and when he attained it and displayed his figure to full view, they could neither of them conceal a smile as they attached to it the idea of a bridegroom. His threadbare snuff-coloured coat but just hung upon the frame within it, and his black small-clothes and worsted stockings seemed, from their magnitude, and the negligence with which they were braced up, in imminent danger of falling about his heels. Having thanked the gentlemen with a voice which formed as strong a contrast to that of his wife, as did his meagre appearance and four-score years

to her tall, fat and jolly person, rendered tough by fifty-five years of celibacy, he desired them to examine the curiosity he had found. This was a miserable insect, whose minuteness had, unfortunately, been insufficient to protect it from the keen spectacles of the naturalist, and had been dragged from its hiding-place on the triumphant point of a pin.

“ Only look at him,” said Mr. M‘Kay, displaying his victim, and gazing eagerly through a microscope; “ see how surprisingly he wags his legs! I’m thinking this will be the *pediculus marinus*—there, don’t touch him—look through the glass, and see how he opens his mouth—he is in his last gasps.”

“ Wonderful indeed!” said Raleigh; “ and where, my good Sir, might you have found him? in your wig?”

“ In Mrs. M‘Kay’s wardrobe,” replied

the enraptured executioner, as he congratulated himself on the vengeance he had taken upon the intruding malefactor.—“ But how is our course? I’m thinking we’ll be some miles from the river just now.”

Henry assented, and hoped he did not feel any ill effects from the water.—“ Ill effects! no, no—I have been over this ground too often; but there’s Mrs. M’Kay is not quite so well as she should be—but no matter, she is strong enough to bear it, and there is the child Aimlie to look to her.”

Raleigh no sooner heard that Mrs. M’Kay began to be sea-sick, than he thought it would afford him a good opportunity of renewing his flirtation with her niece; and, expressing much regret that such an amiable lady should suffer any inconvenience, presently disappeared to offer his assistance. Mr. M’Kay looked after him, and observed he was a wild

lad, and was only gone to make game of the poor body; but this, perhaps, did not discompose him so much as the rude and perilous examination to which his butterflies and tom-tits were subjected. Ardourly trusted he had met with no accident in shipping his treasures. The old gentleman replied in the negative, excepting the loss of a wing from the *tipula rivosa*, or large gnat of Linnaeus, which, indeed, might be said to be a species of the gaffer long-legs. “ But,” he added, “ I am not quite at ease while that lad, may be, is rummaging the portfolio of botanical sketches.”

“ You have nothing to fear, my good sir, from his inspection, he has a great regard for the fine arts, and is no contemptible hand himself; witness that elegant performance before you”—and he pointed to a head chalked upon the deck.

“ Mrs. M‘Kay to the life !” ejaculated the bridegroom with a grin of satisfaction, “ a promising sketch truly, but a little too like the queen upon a twelfth cake. I did not think he had the wit to be a caricaturist—he’ll have me by her side soon, I’m thinking—a jackanapes.” The latter part of this speech had something of petulance in it; but Mr. M‘Kay had, in some measure, outlived his wits, and was rather apt to be out of temper without very visible cause, at which times it required much penetration to find the real one; in the present instance it might be the expectation of seeing his features displayed in caricature, or it might be the snapping off of a button, which happened as he was stooping to contemplate the physiognomy of his wife, and well nigh brought to pass the catastrophe which was always impending.

When this was adjusted, he entered into conversation again, and Ardourly perceived, through the frequent wanderings and imbecilities of age, the remains of a good understanding and dry humour, from which he hoped to extract more amusement than was promised by first appearances.

The ardour of Mr. M'Kay's present pursuit of the insect and feathered tribe had been preceded by not less eager studies of other descriptions which had succeeded each other in whimsical rotation as the progress of years more and more exposed his wavering mind to the dominion of fancy. Thus, after the chief part of a long life had been engrossed by painting, his first symptom of caprice was an attempt to cultivate the sister art, and to become a musician. He played on the spinet, and accompanied it with his voice; his harmonious avoca-

tions continuing the wonder of his friends and the torment of his household for a good twelvemonth; insomuch that he made a piano upon a new construction, and small enough to be his bed-fellow; so that he thrummed and practised his *sol fas* whenever he waked. But being told that he would wear out his lungs, and having the mysteries of those delicate organs explained to him, the musician became curious, and was converted into a doctor; he fancied he had a thousand complaints, and took as many medicines with opposite effects. He visited his sick friends, not to inquire after their health but to taste their physic; and this led to a desire of the knowledge of making it, which, forthwith, turned him into a chemist. Having brushed up his dog Latin, and learned to decipher the hieroglyphics of a medical receipt, physicians from

all quarters were desired to prescribe for imaginary diseases, the doses made up, and carefully preserved till occasion should call for them. But after a few fatal accidents, his fame began to decrease so much, that the want of encouragement turned his ideas from that branch of chemistry to the experimental one; and he passed his time in galvanizing frogs, and other scientific experiments, till he blew himself up, and decided upon another transition. Entomology was promoted to the vacant throne of Pharmacy and Voltaism; and, having, as yet, only met with the trifling inconvenience of running into a river in chase of a butterfly, his new occupation seemed, as the others had done in their day, the most delightful of all; especially, as it admitted the exercise of his pencil, which, through all the fluctuations of his taste, had

been more or less attended to ; perhaps, because it was the one for which he was best gifted by nature.

These particulars were voluntarily communicated by the old man, who took a pleasure in displaying his accomplishments but they could only be dragged at happy intervals from the dark chamber of his memory, in which he vainly groped for many other circumstances which might have been equally interesting.

“ You are a goodly sort of a stripling,” said Mr. M‘Kay, “ but how comes it to pass that you have associated yourself with that noisy, senseless, sailor lad ? I have not spoke a dozen words to him, but he seems, bating a little good nature, which he cannot help, to be no more fit to be about a discreet young person than I was to be married ; though, God reward her, Mrs. M‘Kay may

be as good as any body else, excepting here and there one. But the lad, I was speaking of the lad—you should keep clear of him, for he has a kind of hair-brained wit about him which amuses you whether you will or no, and might make you as bad as himself, saving that you have more sense and more reading.”

Ardourly endeavoured to say something in extenuation of his wild companion, but Raleigh had indulged his talent for ridicule too much at the expense of Mr. M’Kay and his treasures, to be speedily forgiven; he had likewise been over free in his remarks upon Scotland, of which he had a very imperfect knowledge, and had taken the liberty to curse barley broth, as only fit for the pigs, just after the touchy old gentleman had ordered it for dinner, and declared it to be the finest thing in the world.

This “finest thing in the world” which was “only fit for the pigs,” was now delivered from the hands of the cook, whom ’twere base flattery to call a chimney-sweep, into those of the steward, by whom it was conveyed reeking to the cabin. The delicious odour of onions which it left behind put an instantaneous period to the conversation. Mr. M‘Kay, having adjusted his night-cap and tightened up his small clothes, seized Henry by the arm, and made his way down as fast as he could; but not without observing a dish of cauliflower, and begging that his new ally would preserve all the *volvoces vel erucæ*, otherwise caterpillars, that might fall to his share.

Mrs. M‘Kay was not to be seen, while Raleigh and Miss Grey were, perhaps, eyeing the hapless mess with too much malice, for interrupting their *tête-à-tête*, to partake of it.

“ Why, Mrs. M‘Kay, I say: where have you crept to? The broth will be cold !” In reply to this summons, a voice issuing from something like a trap-door faintly exclaimed,

“ I ‘m very poorly !”

“ Well, but get up and take some broth; ‘twill do you good.”

“ Alack, I ‘m very ill !”

After a little while the good lady turned out in her petticoat and stays, with a blanket over her shoulders, and a night-cap so beflapped and befrilled as gave the pitiful countenance within it the appearance of being decked out for a funeral. She was supported to the table, and having taken her seat, the bridegroom hastily splashed a ladle full of the “ best thing in the world,” into a pewter plate, and begged her to fall to. Mrs. M‘Kay took up her spoon and laid it down again two or three times; at last she

mustered resolution to convey a small quantity to her lips, but the wry face which it produced, seemed but too indicative of what would follow if she had the hardihood to proceed further; to Raleigh's delight, therefore, she was again helped through the trap-door, and desired to compose herself.

There was now no one to keep Mr. M'Kay in countenance but the Captain of the vessel, for Ardourly, Raleigh, and the young lady, preferred a biscuit with something less savoury, was produced from the locker, after many urgent representations from the latter of these gentlemen that Miss Grey, rather than be poisoned by his cursed hotch-potch, or whatever it was, would make up her mind to be starved. Mr. M'Kay raised his eyes in silent astonishment at the insult offered to the barley-broth and a fine haggis

which had been announced, but had not leisure to dispute the point with such a scape-grace.

CHAPTER II.

Bright was the prospect which before them shone ;
Gay danced the sun-beams o'er the trembling waves :
Who that the faithless ocean had not known,
Which now the strand in placid whispers laves,
Could e'er believe the rage with which it raves
When angry Boreas bids the storm arise,
And calls his wild winds from their wiutry caves ?
Now soft Favonius breaths his gentlest sighs,
Auspicious omens wait, serenely smile the skies.—*Psyche*.

WHEN dinner was over, Raleigh hoped Mr. M'Kay had feasted to his satisfaction, and begged leave to drink a glass of grog with him. The old man shook his head and said, after he had wiped his mouth and taken out his tooth-pick, for which he had very little use, “ I'd rather drink with you than eat with you, lad, for you are but a sorry judge of dainties, and, doubtless, you are better skilled in the first accomplishment.”

“True,” replied Raleigh, “I learned that bad habit, and many others, when I was stationed off your Scotch coast; how else could a Christian stand your barbarous north-easters? Come, Laird, (for you are that at least,) here’s to our growing friendship, and success to your learned researches.”

Mr. M’Kay was fully as partial as Raleigh to his whiskey-toddy, though his head could not be expected to be quite so good, and they continued drinking together for some time in a kind of skirmishing sociability, disputing the rarity of a certain yellow flower which the one called a *Convallaria Bifolia*, and the other a Dandelion; till Mr. M’Kay shrugged up his shoulders and declared that sailors were the greatest reprobates in the world.

Miss Grey and Ardourly were quietly looking over a portfolio, marked “*Papillones, Culices pipientes*,” &c., and were, by

turns, amused with the conversation, and fearful of its ending in a downright quarrel; this, however, the Captain easily avoided, being one of those favoured few who are at liberty to say what they please without giving offence.

At last he finished the discussion by complaining that Mr. M'Kay so unmercifully brought together the terms of his different sciences that his arguments burst upon him like a bomb-shell, without his knowing what the overwhelming shower was composed of. Indeed, this complaint was just enough, for the whiskey had set afloat all Mr. M'Kay's various knowledge, which jostled itself from a comparison between the bills of the *tringa hypoleucus* and the *scolopax gallinago*, (which, for aught Raleigh knew, might mean crows and magpies,) to a discourse upon *digitalis* and *hydrargyrum, soprano*,

falsettos, perspective and neutral tints; all of which were as cleverly mixed together as if they had been pounded with a pestle and mortar.

"I must now talk a little to your niece, Laird," said Raleigh, "for the mind needs relaxation after such learned exertions." "Pray, Miss Grey, do you not think you will be very miserable in Scotland, after the character I have given of it?" The young lady laughed, and inquired why he went thither himself if he disliked it so much.

"Why do I? ay, very true, why do I? upon my word I cannot say, but I suppose I shall know when I get there. Oh, I recollect I am going to shoot Mr. M'Kay's grouse—how are they, Sir, pretty plenty?"

"That's not so great a favour to grant," replied the naturalist, "and, if any body will trust you with a gun, (which, doubtless,

would be no proof of their sense,) I have no objection to your taking a day upon the muirs, (which you would take, whether I had or no,) provided you do not shoot at my windows, and will bring Lady Brachenshaw any muirfowl, or *tetrao tetrix*, that is daft enough to be killed by you."

" Well, I could have sworn we should be excellent friends ; we took a liking to each other from the first. But who is Lady Brachenshaw ? " " Lady Brachenshaw ! who but the lady of the manor ? She that is Mrs. M'Kay." Ardourly begged to know if he meant Brachenshaw on Dee side ; and, being answered in the affirmative, said he was happy they were bound for the same neighbourhood ; his own destination being Invercraig, which was but a few miles from Brachenshaw. Mr. M'Kay expressed some surprise, and appeared to be struggling with his

whiskey to collect his ideas, which, like an army dispersed by the enemy, were running in every direction ; but they had been running for some time, and the greater part of them were out of sight, so that the general beat to quarters in vain.

“ I ’ve some sort of recollection,” he said, “ of hearing you talked about there.”

“ Very likely, Sir, I was there about two years since.”

“ Twas said that Invercraig had borrowed a son of some old acquaintance, who, as I think, was to be there somewhere about now. But I am old, and remember things badly. You ’ll not be the lad yourself, I trust ?” “ And why not ?” said Henry ; his thoughts immediately recurring to his mysterious letter.

“ Do you mean you are the lad himself then ?” Henry assented. “ I ’m sorry for

it, I'm sorry for it—go home again as fast as you can."

Henry inquired further, but the old man checked himself as he was going to reply. "Why so, d'ye ask? how should I know? how—that is, the bottle's out, and I'll e'en take a nap beside Lady Brachenshaw and her thirteen petticoats." The young men urged him to explain what he meant, but he grew pettish, and would make no further communications, save and except that he thought them a brace of puppies; with which sentiment he closed the conversation, and the trap-door through which he had vanished like the ghost in a pantomime.

Henry was perplexed at Mr. M'Kay's advice, nor was his friend less so; and they began to think there was something more serious in the note than they had

at first suspected. Nothing satisfactory, however, could be obtained from their own conjectures, and they were compelled to delay any further inquiry till Mr. M'Kay had slept off the effects of the whiskey; when, indeed, the chances were that he would be doubly cautious.

It was now six o'clock, and the party being freed from the company of the new married couple, who gave very audible proof of enjoying a sound slumber, went upon deck to breathe the fresh air. They had made a great way from the land, of which only a blue indication was visible, and the breeze was still bearing them from it. Miss Grey felt almost alarmed as, in Raleigh's phrase, the craft lay gunnel under, and its mast seemed cracking with the fulness of its sails; but she was soon convinced of being in no danger, and received as full en-

joyment from the beauty of the evening and the novelty of her situation, as could be felt by an affectionate heart, which was borne from a happy home to new friends and a new country. It was just the mood for her new admirer to profit by, and Ardourly had too much consideration to mar their happiness by his presence—he sat at a distance from them, and amused himself with a book; so that, for two good hours, they met with no interruption to the advancement of their mutual good will; and, ere they went below, had their unconscious feelings pretty truly unfolded to them in the wild song of a sea boy on the rigging.

Thou art lovely in every place,
At every moment dear ;
But, oh ! thou art doubly so
When I gaze upon thee here.

The more we regret fond hearts,
We have left far o'er the tide,
The more we rely on the one
Which is beating by our side.

Yon planet that looks so bright,
When a thousand more are by,
Will it not be brighter far
When the rest have left the sky?

They found Mr. and Mrs. M'Kay just risen ; the former something more collected, and the latter rather better—in her replies to the gentlemen's inquiries there was a marked difference ; to Henry she was very profuse of her civility, while to his less fortunate companion there was a studied shortness and distance of manner, which rather surprised him till he discovered the cause. The mystery was soon out, for her lack of discretion left her character and propensities

open to general inspection, and the whole of Raleigh's offence was deduced from the superior prospects of his friend, of which, it appeared, her husband had sufficiently informed her to flatter certain ideas, ever on the alert, of providing for her niece. Emily knew very well what she was about, (for it was by no means the first time she had been the subject of such plotting), and she coloured with shame and vexation. Mrs. M'Kay was doatingly, but not disinterestedly, fond of her; she thought that the beauty and accomplishments of her *protégée* reflected credit on her own discernment in bringing them forward; she loved to have it said, that *she* first discovered the dawning beauty; that, but for *her*, the talent for music, the delicate voice, would have remained uncultivated and unknown. But, independent of the satisfaction she received

from appropriating to herself the full half of the praises bestowed upon her niece, there was great convenience in having such a person about her; for, during her maiden life, she would otherwise have found some difficulty in persuading the gentlemen to hand her to her chair, and make themselves so very useful as she frequently found them. Besides this, there was infinite amusement derived from the speculations she made for her of a matrimonial nature; she thought women were born to be married, and for nothing else; and, though very near out in her calculations with regard to herself, nothing could be said to shake this general principle.

On her first coming on board she had set down one of the gentlemen for her nephew, and was well pleased when Raleigh shewed signs of a liking for Miss Grey. As she lay in bed in the early part of the day, sick as she

was, she lent an attentive ear to their *tête-à-tête*, and made sure that she discovered a partiality of such rapid growth as must lead to serious proposals before the end of the voyage. This she took the earliest opportunity of communicating to Mr. M'Kay, begging him to find out all the young gentleman's history, that she might be prepared with a reply ; but the disclosures her husband was enabled to make, caused a material alteration in her plans, and none but Ardourly was to be the happy man. Whatever intimacy had taken place between Raleigh and Emily was now a cause of chagrin ; and she proceeded, with much despatch, to effect a retrograde movement ; the hopes of the former she meant to dissipate by her distant coolness, and to turn those of the latter to the advantages of the other connexion.

As soon as Henry could get rid of Mrs.

M'Kay's overwhelming courtesy, he returned to the subject which most interested him, and for which the shrewd old Scot seemed prepared. "Why, as for saying you had best go home again, I only meant that our parts of the Highlands are in a perturbed state just now, and I would advise none to go amongst them who are able to stay away."

"I might ask, if this did not apply to yourself as well as to me; but what is the disturbance you allude to?"

Mr. M'Kay said, it was the desperation of those who lately lived by running spirits, who, by the interference of the military, newly stationed at the most convenient places for the prevention of that traffic, had been driven, in many instances, from offences against the revenue to a violation of life and property.

Mrs. M'Kay looked horror-struck, but her friend and well-wisher, Raleigh, endeavoured to comfort her by vowing that Scotland was a villainous country, for, if a respectable lady escaped from marauders, there was imminent danger of her going through the auto-da-fé ceremony for a witch.—Mrs. M'Kay experienced another shock, and her spouse, putting on his usual dry grin, observed that she looked as if she expected to be so honoured herself.

Henry was but ill satisfied with the old gentleman's explanation, and his curiosity increased, but the means of satisfying it were to be sought at a more convenient season, when Mr. M'Kay might be less wary and less desirous of discussing other topics; for, at present, he was revising and correcting the whole system of natural philosophy from the mite to the mammoth.

On the third day from that on which they left London, our party found themselves within sight of Leith, and Mrs. M'Kay now began to renew the importunities with which she had besieged Ardourly to join them in their journey to the Highlands, instead of travelling by separate conveyances. Ardourly objected to this proceeding, as Captain Raleigh, who was not invited, would then be left to travel by himself; but the inconvenience was soon remedied; for, hostile as Mrs. M'Kay was to Raleigh, she preferred having his company to losing that of his friend, and the invitation was immediately extended to him. There was no danger of an excuse here; but it happened very unfortunately, that after this point was settled, Henry started another objection which was not so easily to be overruled; and this was, the urgent necessity he professed to be

under of arriving at Invercraig, (a distance of an hundred miles) on the following evening; such rapidity would ill suit the infirmities of Mr. M'Kay, who, to cut up the whole plan at once, was obliged to stop a day at Edinburgh on business. Great was the disappointment of Mrs. M'Kay at this obstacle; but, as it was unavoidable, it occurred to her that the first thing now to be done was to retract her proposal to Raleigh. It would have been too ill bred to do this in a direct way, but she went as little short of it as possible. “Perhaps, Captain Raleigh,” said she, “as Mr. Ardourly cannot accompany us, you may wish to be absolved from your engagement; if so, I beg you will use no ceremony with us.”

“Indeed, I greatly prefer making the journey with your Ladyship,” replied Raleigh, who perceived her drift, and highly enjoyed

the dilemma in which she had placed herself. “ Mr. Ardourly will do very well without me.” “ But you forget that we are to stay a day, and perhaps more, at Edinburgh.”

“ That is just what I wish to do myself.”

“ But it is possible we may stay a fortnight.”

“ My dear Madam, that will suit me better still.”

Lady Brachenshaw was quite disconcerted, but, after a moment's consideration, replied, with a look which we put on when we think we have made a capital hit. “ It is impossible that you can suffer Mr. Ardourly to travel alone, when the country is so infested by robbers.”

“ That is the very reason,” returned the provoking Captain, “ why I should afford the little protection in my power to your Ladyship.”

Mrs. M'Kay's resources were all exhausted, and, to her consummate mortification, it was settled that Raleigh was to occupy the place in the vehicle which was intended for Henry. This mortification was not at all lessened by Mr. M'Kay, (who had hitherto been a silent listener, and amused himself with conjecturing what his wife would say next,) for, as soon as the bargain was ratified, he whispered to her loud enough for the rest to hear, " You have shot at a pigeon and killed a crow, eh, Lady Brachenshaw?" But above all, (for he had taken a sort of liking to the " humorous, daft lad," who had found it would be good policy to attend to his learned discourses,) he invited him to dine with them that day at their hotel, and to spend the evening in teaching Miss Grey to sketch butterflies.

They were all now put ashore in the boat,

and Henry having obtained nothing further from Mr. M'Kay than a caution as to where he slept, (seeing that the beds in Scotland were somewhat infested by the *cimex lectularius*, or red bug of Linnæus,) as soon as he could provide himself and his servant with horses, bade adieu to his new friends, and congratulating Raleigh on his happy mode of conveyance, commenced his journey.

CHAPTER III.

Whence comest thou ? What wouldest thou ? Thy name ?

Say, what's thy name ?

Thou hast a grim appearance, and thy face

Bears a command in't.

CORIOLANUS.

THE first fifty miles presented no occurrence worthy of note, and Ardourly dismounted late in the evening, to pass the night at Cupar in Angus. Early the next day he was mounted again, but had not rode far before his steed, which was none of the best, shewed evident signs that it had not forgotten the labours of the preceding day. This unlucky recollection had likewise considerable effect on the other quadruped, which, from the badness of the roads and the frequency of its stumbles,

contrived to fall dead lame. The further the travellers went the worse grew the animals, and the less passable the ways, and, at length they were reduced to the necessity of dismounting to walk. There was now full leisure for Henry to survey the scene around him, but had there been less he would possibly have admired it more: the day was clear and sunny, and a high wind swept the clouds in volumes round the crags on either side of him; the valley between them was prolonged in sympathetic desolation, and not a living creature but the lessening eagle, not a house nor even a tree was to be seen. Henry looked upon the length of his journey and the means by which it was to be accomplished, with about the same satisfaction which we receive from the contemplation of a large bill and an empty purse, but his countenance was suddenly brightened

and his mind roused from such painful calculations, by the faint but distinct sound of a drum. He strained his eyes in the direction, and perceived at a great distance, where a small brook crossed the winding of the road, a line of diminutive figures passing over a thin aërial bridge ; these, he had no doubt, were a party of soldiers who, he had heard, were to leave Cupar that morning, and halt for the night at the Spital of Glen-shee ; and, as his situation was not very agreeable, nor indeed very safe, he resolved to do his best to overtake them, and halt there likewise ; which, from the state of his horses, would be the utmost he could perform that day, though still twenty-five miles from his journey's end.

It was near the evening before he came up with the objects of his pursuit, who were, as he surmised, the sol-

diers destined for Glenshee, where they arrived about sun-set. It was a lone and miserable public-house, (far different from the smart inn now erected,) in the most wild seclusion of the Grampians, and the inhabitants, both in manners and appearance, seemed made for the scenery around them. As soon as the parties had come to some understanding as to the wants of the one and the capabilities of the other, the accommodation was found to be choice and abundant ; Ardourly and the officer being to occupy the same dormitory with mine host and hostess, the latter of whom passed many eulogiums on the bed, which was as large and beautiful as a gentleman could wish. It was with rueful visages that the travellers inquired if they were *all* to sleep in the same bed, and they considered themselves fortunate in being answered in the

negative ; there was a fine curtain to draw across the room, and, if the gentlemen would not peep through the holes, it would be as good as a wall. The other gentlemen in the red coats, and the gentleman holding the beasts, and the beasts themselves, should have some heather in the stable.

Where there is no alternative, there is, or *should* be, no dispute ; and the travellers resolved to be satisfied with a promise, that the poorness of their accommodation should be fully atoned for by the richness of their fare. To effect this laudable intention of their entertainers, an instantaneous war was waged with the cocks and hens ; and, a due despatch being used in the other appertainments to the feast, Ardourly soon found it in a state of forwardness, and thought it was now time to see if his horses were equally fortunate with himself.

In the yard which enclosed the sorry apology for a stable, he was somewhat surprised to encounter the scrutiny of a stout raw-boned young man, who appeared to regard him with particular solicitude. The wildness of his whole figure seemed nearly allied to the maniac; but a single glance of his small, grey, and deep-sunk eye, which flickered like a glow-worm through his long white hair, tangled and flaky as the forest pony, bespoke a sharpness of intellect which might have been creditable enough to the owner, if every muscle of his flat and freckled face had not combined to characterize the undeniable thief. His head was bare, as were his feet and legs, his only covering being a ragged tartan jacket and breeches of the same, hanging over the knee in unconfined tatters. If Ardourly was surprised at the first sight, he was more so when this

ungainly object, bending forwards and slyly beckoning, uttered something like his own name ; at the same time, skulking round a corner and looking about him with a cunning timidity, with which he might be supposed to preface an attack upon the hen-roost. Having followed him to a place where they were concealed from the persons employed in rubbing down the horses, Henry demanded what he wanted, but was answered in Gaelic ; he then pointed to the house, signifying the necessity of an interpreter, but this by no means suited his friend, who shook his head in unequivocal disagreement. Having let him so far into his mind, he proceeded to rummage with both hands amongst the various crannies of his small-clothes for that which might be used as a pocket ; as soon as the right hole was found, a note was produced, addressed

to Henry Ardourly, Esq., and, in a moment the messenger was out of sight.

Ardourly hastily broke it open, and to his astonishment, recognised the hand of his late correspondent.

“ Once more Mr. Ardourly is urged not
“ to despise the warning of one who is anxious
“ for his welfare, but who finds it impossible
“ to serve him otherwise than in this mys-
“ terious manner. Since he *has* ventured
“ hither, he will do well to be cautious of all
“ strangers, and silent upon the advice he has
“ received.”

He felt more perplexed than ever; it was now evident that Raleigh's surmise was unfounded, and that these threatened perils were not designed to detain him at home, but really as the letters stated, to dissuade him from coming to Scotland; since the bearer employed, and the wafer

which was scarcely dry, sufficiently proved that the note he held in his hand was not only written here, but within the last hour, and consequently very near the spot on which he stood. His first impulse was to pursue the fugitive, but he was unsuccessful; for, though there was but one road, and that straight enough to shew a much greater distance than he could possibly have gone in the time, yet the numberless sheep-tracks and ravines which led from it to the intricacies of the bordering hills, might have enabled him to elude the observation of an hundred pair of eyes, had he been so disposed. Ardourly next had recourse to inquiry, but could obtain no accounts of him, except that his name was Wandering Willie, and that he was very much in the habit of mistaking the goods of other people for his own.

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It was, perhaps, with more curiosity to discover his fair friend, than fear of the dangers which awaited him, that Henry found himself involved in the dark web of adventure; and, if he had sense to laugh at the romantic visions of beauty in distress, which, perforce crowded upon his mind, they certainly formed the subject of a very interesting reverie, which was only broken by the landlady's vociferations for the gentleman that was to dine with the Captain; with sundry apologies for Wandering Willie, whose nimble fingers had snapped up one of the roasted fowls, and whose nimble feet had outstripped all likelihood of a re-capture.

The young officer being a type of most of his profession, (that is to say, frank, gay, and giddy,) proved a not ineligible companion in the gloom of the twilit hills, nor

till he observed that he could not find the way to his whiskey, did either of them remember how long they had sat. But now the soldier reluctantly discovered that it was time to dispose of his men for the night, and left the table, confounding the hard fate which had sent him to catch thieves, and sentimentalize in the mountains.

While he was absent, Ardourly walked to the window to contemplate the bold effect of the moon which was just then partially visible ; all was dark and silent beneath, except the faint and melancholy cry of the muirfowl, which gave token that their heathy domains were undisturbed by the habitations of man. He looked and listened with increasing interest as the full floating orb ascended above the rugged outline of the crags, and by degrees revealed the patches of heath and pale grey stone which diver-

sified their sides. At one time he fancied he saw figures moving on the road, but, at that moment a cloud passing over the moon, prevented him from ascertaining whether he saw correctly; and, when the light returned, nothing could be distinguished but the shadows of scattered fragments. He believed he had been deceived, and turning his eyes another way, perceived some writing scratched on a pane of the window; which, on being examined in a direction which placed it opposite to the light, proved to be poetry, and perfectly legible. The formation of the letters, and its strange accordance with the advice of his unknown friend, convinced him at once that both were from the same hand.

Yet hie thee back; yon bank is bright
Where starry dew-drops catch the light.

And flow'rs, with tendrils twined, diffuse
Their mingling sweets from blended hues,
But dream not that thy limbs shall rest
Where the coy springling hide, like lovers newly
blest.

Yet hie thee back ; on yonder stream
Full gaily plays the living beam,
And rock and foliage seem to dance
As eddying waves on waves advance,
But rock shall wear, and wave shall sink
Ere thou shalt see thy face reflected from the
brink.

The wild deer proudly stalks the glen,
The heath-cock chuckles far from men,
But them thy voice shall never scare
From peaceful muir or secret lair ;
The only breath of thine they find
Is when thy dying sigh comes struggling down the
wind.

While he was reading these lines over a
second time, a form passed quickly by, and

presently a stranger was ushered into the room, with the landlady's regrets that there was no other place to show the gentleman into. Henry begged she would not think of apologizing, and the stranger, with some slight expression of unwillingness to intrude, took his seat at the further end of the room. For some minutes both were silent ; the one continuing to muse over the poetry, and the other patiently waiting till it should please mine hostess to bring in his promised refreshment ; but, being at length wearied with the riddle which he could not solve, Henry turned to break the ice with his new companion, whose large glistening eyes alone were visible from the dark corner he had appropriated. They were fully bent upon our hero ; at which, however, he was not much surprised, (for, in a room for the accommodation of travellers, there is little to

do but to stare at each other,) and he soon succeeded in removing the distance between them. At the same time, he found (what the darkness had prevented him from seeing,) that the person he conversed with was one of a better order than he had expected to meet in such a place. The conversation naturally turned upon the sport of the muirs, which, it seemed, he had been pursuing further than he intended. “ But no matter,” he said, “ my volume and my fowling-piece have often led me further than I was aware, and have not unfrequently seduced me to a heather bed, as they have to-night.”

“ You do not proceed to-night?” said Ardourly.

“ I have some distance to go; but the weather is warm, and a lodging in the open air will not be unpleasant.”

“ But have you no dread from the disturbed state of the country?”

The stranger answered with a slight tone of irony—" What dread can there be when our masters send so many brave soldiers for our protection?"

The officer, having performed his duty, now re-appeared, followed by the jingling usquebaugh equipage, and the glimmer of a farthing rush-light. " Good luck to the boys," said he, " I have lodged them safe in the hen-house and pig-sty. They will make but a sorry appearance when I march off with the heroic remnant the fleas may be pleased to leave me."

" What time do you propose starting in the morning?" asked Henry.—" As soon as my warriors have done scratching themselves, which, I hope, will be soon after sun-rise. Will you be ready to march by that time?"

" If I might offer my advice and guidance," interrupted the stranger, " you would

accompany my moon-light walk, which lies in the direction you are going."

" Nay, you cannot be sure of that."

" Did you not tell me? Then it was the woman who shewed me in—My knowledge of the country enables me to make the walk to Invercraig a dozen miles shorter than it is by the road."

" Indeed, I thank you for the offer, but were I to accept it, I doubt if my arrival would not be at too unseasonable an hour to procure me admittance. If I might offer my advice in return, I should recommend you to arm yourself against your expedition at the fuming bowl of our captain." So saying, he left the room to try what discoveries he could make respecting the poetry, and likewise to find whether this stranger had really learnt his destination from the hostess; which he was inclined to doubt,

believing that she was ignorant of it herself. To the first question of “Who wrote the verses?” he received a “dinna ken;” and to the second, of “What company had been there lately?” mine hostess (for the honour of her house), returned such a list that it was impossible to say who might be the poet. He then asked, “if she knew whither he was going?” to which he received another “dinna ken;” and with this much information he returned; not altogether sorry that he had declined a moon-light walk with a person who seemed to know more of his affairs than he had any need to do. In addition to this, he did not exactly like the appearance of his volunteer guide, whose sallow countenance (though graced by good features) seemed *constrained* to the expression of frank and gentlemanly civility, rather than to possess it naturally; for, behind

this, there appeared a harshness of character, and something approaching to a scowl, indicative both of pride and ferocity. It was possible that this might be the very person against whom he was warned by his anonymous friend; and, when he recalled the figures of several persons whom he believed he had seen just before the stranger's appearance, he was well pleased to remember how well the little inn was defended. He re-entered the room, and found the stranger engaged with a small pocket volume; the refreshment he had ordered remained untouched, and he did not join in the conversation for some time; only now and then looking up, as the officer mentioned the arrangement he had made in his new avocation of justice of the peace; or, as Ardourly spoke of his voyage and the companions of it, which seemed to have particular interest.

“ I have met old M‘Kay,” said the soldier, “ and he talked so knowingly about the thieves, that, I swear, if it were not from his decrepitude, I could almost believe him to be the captain of the banditti.”

“ Dotard!” exclaimed the stranger, and his eye fell again upon his book; but, thinking it necessary to explain, he added—“ I have seen him in Edinburgh—I hear he is married !”

“ Yes,” said Ardourly, “ and the bride has pressed me to stay with them at Brachenshaw; but—”

The soldier laughed. “ But you do not wish to give the bridegroom cause of jealousy? That is very considerate, but, if you do not accept the invitation, I shall certainly be your substitute and billet myself upon him, for it is just the quarter I am ordered to. Besides, it is said,

that he has a pretty relation staying there."

The stranger again raised his dark eye, but did not speak; and Ardourly replied, that, as he had not heard the young lady mentioned, he supposed that the old gentleman's philosophical pursuits and hymeneal happiness had driven her from his mind. "The Laird of Brachenshaw," he added, is "likely to be well garrisoned, for my friend, Captain Raleigh, intends to quarter upon him likewise, in honour of his wife's niece."

"Do you mean Raleigh who commanded a ship here in the North Sea?" "The same."

The soldier said he was a gallant officer, and he wished he had not been removed from his station, which had since been overrun by privateers. "Conceive," he continued, "one fellow has been cruising there (a

Frenchman), who had the impudence, not long ago, to come on shore. A fisherman saw him landed, towards night-fall, among the rocks near Aberdeen."

"Indeed!" the stranger said, "Did he not follow him?"

"A man, supposed to be him, was traced from Aberdeen to Kinkairn; from whence he took the road to Tullich, which, by-the-by," turning to Henry, "is not far from Invercraig; so that you may, perhaps, fall in with him. He is, of course, thought to be a spy—so say my instructions," producing a paper, and reading, "middle-aged, middling stature, strong, square built, black hair, well favoured."—"Upon my word, Sir," addressing the stranger, "you answer the description in every thing but costume; and that *tome première* on the back of your book would almost authorize me to detain you.

In faith, I must make you my prisoner till to-morrow morning at least, unless you ransom yourself by drinking a glass of my toddy, for, as yet, you have not tasted a drop." The stranger smiled. "I will rather pay the penalty than suffer the inconvenience;" and, having drank his glass and pocketed his book, he observed it was time for him to depart. "Perhaps, gentlemen, we may meet again—till then, farewell." Thus saying, he resumed his highland bonnet, and, throwing his plaid over a great coat, fitted close to his shape, bowed slightly, and was gone.

CHAPTER IV.

Come then, my dearest son, I'll now give thee
A taste of my love to thee: be thou my deputy,
The factor and disposer of my business;
Keep my accounts, and order my affairs;
They must be all your own.

Rowley.

EARLY in the morning Ardourly arrived at Castleton, whence, taking leave of his escort, he proceeded to Invercraig, of which he came in sight, while its tall grey tower was but just distinguishable through the sunny haze which surrounded it. His way lay by the side of the Dee, and the rush of the water, mingling with the voice of the linnet in the brakes beside it, gave an additional cheerfulness to the feeling which was raised by the termination of a long journey, and the immediate prospect of meeting his kind benefac-

tor. Now and then, however, an unsatisfactory thought intruded itself, which considerably damped this pleasure ; and it arose from the possibility that the domains, which he was taught to look upon as his future property, might become so to the detriment of others who had better claims to them. This he had often hinted to his friend, who as often assured him that his fears were groundless ; but Ardourly was nice in his ideas of honour and justice, and when he accepted the proposal it was with a degree of reluctance for which few, perhaps, would have seen any occasion. There was another reflection also, of which he could not divest himself; namely, that he had been persuaded to leave an honourable profession for an unworthy dependency, and this without feeling his pride satisfied by any ties of relationship which might warrant the adoption ; a reflection which na-

turally brought with it a remembrance of the many mortifications to which his new situation subjected him; such as the Laird's caprice, the slights of his acquaintance, and, perhaps, the final disappointment of his expectations, with the pity, or derision, of all who understood them.

Thus it was with a mixture of pain and pleasure that Ardourly found himself at Invercraig, awaiting the appearance of its master, who had not yet risen from his bed. He had not been there many minutes when he beheld, through the door which opened into the great hall, the streamers of a dressing-gown, flying aloft with the rapid motion of the wearer, and, presently, in darted the tall, thin figure of Ayrton, of Invercraig, with "Welcome, my son, a thousand and a thousand times," which was backed by an embrace so warm as left Ardourly

scarce breath enough to make a suitable reply.

Mr. Ayrton's age was between fifty and sixty, but he was much younger in spirit and activity. He was a strong contrast to the generality of his neighbours ; a secluded life having, in no degree, impaired the polish of an education in more fashionable circles ; and the beau of the last century remained the admiration of the present. So much was this the case, that Henry half suspected, as soon as his sables were thrown aside, and the little white wig re-instated, that a new bride might console him for the loss of the old one ; an event which might materially alter the course of his own future life, but, whose idea, gave him no uneasiness, as it would afford him a fair pretext to recede from a compact he already began to repent. But, in this supposition, it is probable that

Ardourly did not take into consideration the many points of Mr. Ayrton's character which were hostile to it. A second marriage was not at all likely, when the want of an heir only had forced him into a first; and, though the solemn look and decent shake of the head might be very proper at the present season, it was well known that his grief at getting rid of his shackles was not equal to his chagrin at putting them on. In short, he was not a marrying man; and rather preferred being the desire of the ladies in general than the property of any one in particular; but, as this was only a sentiment jocularly expressed by *himself*, it must not be understood to imply any thing like antiquated vanity, either of person or acquirements; for he was the most unaffected of human beings, and the genteel raillery, which was his usual style of conversation,

was as often exerted at the expense of what he termed his own foppishness, as it was against the roughness or other peculiarities of his neighbours.

The whole establishment of Invercraig corresponded, to a nicety, with the mind of its possessor. The outward, castellated appearance of the building, prepared the visitor for the rude interior and ungraceful hospitality of other days; but, once over the threshold, any one, suddenly transported thither, might have believed himself in the near neighbourhood of fashion, and far removed from the barren hills, amongst which it seemed almost a miracle how so much elegance could be collected. And if, amongst downy sofas, gilded mirrors, and embroidered curtains, there appeared an over-exact taste in the minutiae of adornment; the well-assorted library, which was capacious enough

to allow a liberal distribution to every other apartment, fully redeemed Mr. Ayrton's character from the imputation of exclusive attention to trifles. Sometimes, indeed, he affected to be ashamed of the ornamental part of his house, and laid the whole credit of it to his wife; of whom we are sorry we can say nothing, except that she was wholly innocent of the charge; and had been now three months resident in the kirk-yard of Crathie.

As soon as the good man had hugged and squeezed the hand of his adopted as long as he thought necessary, he remembered he was but half shaved, and, conducting Ardourly to the breakfast-table that he might find employment till his return, withdrew to finish his toilet. “ You know,” he said, as he wheeled round with a flourish of his rose-coloured dressing-gown, “ I was a beau in my

young days, and I have not yet managed to reform."

Whatever disagreeable sensations Ardourly might have felt at becoming dependent on another, they were much lessened by the exceeding kindness of his reception, and he determined, since the die *was cast*, to torment himself no more with the possible consequences; as for those which were denounced upon him as the result of a disobedience to his secret adviser, and of a sojournment in a country where he might chance to have an enemy, (though who he might be, and how he was made so, remained a mystery), they caused him so little uneasiness, that he resolved not to mention to his benefactor a subject which might be productive of needless alarm. At all events, he would say nothing of it till he could lay hands on the carcase of wandering Willie, or ex-

tract something more comprehensible from Mr. M'Kay.

In the mean time there was every thing to make him happy. His mind had never harmonized with the general society he had quitted, but possessed a natural refinement as different from the world of business around him, as a solitary line of poetry amidst a volume of prose. For such a one the retirement of Invercraig was rich in charms, which were not to be found elsewhere. There was undisturbed leisure for the studies of an enlightened understanding, with means as ample as could be enjoyed in a city ; there was the blue dwelling-place of nature for contemplation, with the fleet foot of her mountain roe for diversion.

When Mr. Ayrton re-entered, he was dressed in an old-fashioned, but handsome suit of sables, with ornamental glass buttons,

silk stockings and pumps, as if he had been preparing for a ball-room ; the only contradiction to such a surmise being a pair of short, black spatter-dashes. He again embraced Ardourly, and, surveying him all over, declared the two years of his absence had made him all that he ought to be.

The few attempts the Laird of Invercraig had made to look dismal at the first mention of his departed lady were all he could afford from his heart-felt pleasure, and he ceased, at once and altogether, to resist the opportunity she had left him of once more enjoying the liberty of a single man ; the arrival of Henry, therefore, was to be triumphantly celebrated with bagpipe and Highland fling, and the Laird signified his intention of mounting his nag, to bid the company himself. “ I scarcely remember how to ride,” he said, “ but you shall school me

in the noble art. I have a better bit of blood for you than you brought from Edinburgh, I promise you."

Ardourly was too old a horseman to feel any fatigue from the distance he had already come, and they went forth through glad faces and bobbing heads, assembled from every occupation about the premises to do honour to their young master, with whose frank good-nature and liberality they were acquainted from former experience. The Laird rode by his side the picture of exultation; his upright body more erect than ever, and his legs projecting before him like a pair of shafts—the very cue of his brown peruke seemed animated with glee; dancing merrily to the niggling shuffle of the galloway, who snorted and cocked his tail in all the pride of a half year's idleness.

Wherever they went, from the manse to

the farm, from the farm to the hovel, the congratulations were loud and long; and, as they conversed by the way, they continued to advance further and further in mutual satisfaction; the one, from a lively sense of the many kind arrangements which had been made for his comfort and amusement, and the other, from an increasing conviction that they could not have been made for a *protégé*, who would do more credit to his choice. With such feelings, Ardourly soon saw there had been no necessity for his very peremptory resolves to forget the inconveniences to which his new life was exposed; for they appeared to him as the shadows raised by a foolishly fastidious imagination, and glided away without requiring an effort to expel them. Indeed, he had not a wish to be gratified—yes, *one*—he found there would be one sort of society

indispensable amongst these mountain wildernesses, over which they would cast a romantic influence, and render lovelier what, in all situations, was still most lovely. His wish was to hear an account, corresponding with that which had been given by the young officer who had been his companion, of Mr. M'Kay's pretty relation; now the solitary inhabitant of Brachenshaw. Mr. Ayrton shook his head with a look of comical gravity, and vowed he would countenance no practices against the serenity of his Scottish maidens; Jessie Colraith in particular, because she happened to be the fairest, as well as the best, of them all. But Ardourly was not to be rallied from his subject, and discovered, what he never knew before, that Miss Colraith was a near connexion to Mr. Ayrton, and had not been mentioned in his last visit to Invercraig,

from the sense of a painful detail which must have followed ; but he was now come upon a different footing, and it was necessary that he should be informed of her history.

“ Our country,” the good Laird premised, “ has ever been a chosen scene of troubles, and, you are aware, it was amongst these that, some twenty years ago, I became acquainted with my good friend, your father, who was then a soldier ; but you are ignorant (perhaps, from his dislike to the subject,) of the particular circumstances under which that acquaintance commenced.

“ My kinsman, Colraith of Gleneldie, had made himself mistrusted by the prevailing party, from the harmless offence of not embracing it ; he was a man devoted to peace and to an amiable wife, from whom a hard sentence, built upon unjust accusations, condemned him to banishment ; and his

estates were confiscated. The man who expelled him upon his hopeless pilgrimage, and destroyed the mansion of his happiness, was your father. Burning with the ardour of a disposition, which twenty years have somewhat sobered down, I suspected he had gone beyond his commission, and sought redress. But he had only done a duty which he dared not disobey, and it appeared to have been one so truly hostile to his feelings, that instead of the enemy I had looked for, he became my friend. Gleneldie's wife had taken refuge with your whimsical acquaintance, M'Kay of Brachenshaw; but, though we afterwards obtained the restitution of his property to her and her infant, we could not comfort her—her husband was irrevocably banished, and—she died. Gleneldie too must be dead, for I have not heard of him these many years.

Jessie has remained at Brachenshaw ever since; the child of simple and affecting excellence; for, though her fortune amply supplies her with the means of following her inclinations, whatever they might be, her whole attention is confined to the old man's comforts, and an unpretending kindness to all who need it."

" I am afraid," said Henry, " the society of the new lady of Brachenshaw will not add much to her happiness. Suppose, my dear Sir, you ask her to take up her residence at Invercraig? Her old relation, in his new circumstances, may not be sorry to part with her?"

" What stay with young fellows like us! Well, be it so, with all my heart. Perhaps we may find her a husband between us.

" Upon my word, it is not at all impossible, if she will forgive in the son the un-

willing duty of the father ; and, I will bear your invitation to her to-morrow."

Ardourly's high-wrought imagination was ringing the changes upon this new charm of his Scottish life, without once calculating on the possibility of an objection on the part of the young lady, when the course of their visits to the stragglers of the muir brought them to the foot of the thunder-rifted Loch-na-Garr, which they surveyed against the sun, in deep shadow. The bright summer clouds were sleeping on its triple-peaked summit, and the mist of a hundred rivulets was creeping up its side, disguising its rugged crags, and softening and uniting its many colours into one majestic and unvaried sheet of ethereal blue. The only sign of life in its great stillness, was the steady wheel of the eagle, which seemed rejoicing over the unassailable secu-

rity of its eyrie, and shrieking homage to the genius of the surrounding hills.

While they were admiring the magnificence of this scene, the Laird told Henry that whenever he chose to ascend, he must not forget to look out for the picturesque abode of a personage who would give him as dainty a repast as he could wish for, and tell his fortune besides.—He meant the famed Kitty Rankie, whose familiar appropriation of what did not belong to her, had made it convenient for her to forego all approximation to those who had any thing to lose; while her well-tutored offspring, yclept Wandering Willie, was employed to market for her, in conjunction with his other avocation as spy for the smugglers.

Ardourly turned at the name of Wandering Willie, and asked if it were likely that he would be found with his mother; but was

told that he was never to be found *anywhere*, or would long since have occupied a place in the Tolbooth.

“ I have, nevertheless, a great mind to make the attempt. You must know, the gentleman is an acquaintance of mine, and dined at my expense yesterday. Yonder is a boy to hold my horse, and a man who will, perhaps, shew me the way, while you jog leisurely on.”

As this person approached, with a gun and several dogs, Henry recognised an old friend, and the Laird, wishing them an agreeable visit, did as he had been desired.

“ Kenneth,” said Ardourly, “ I rejoice to see you !” and Kenneth was no less so to see his young master. He was a young man who called himself game-keeper, but was, indeed, so much the Laird’s favourite, that he employed himself pretty nearly as he

pleased. His slender form and pale face, which was handsome and full of expression, were the certain indication of the mountain bard. There was poetry in every tone of his voice, in every fold of his plaided garment, and the white collar, which fell unconfined over his neck, displayed his throat with a grace and negligence which were equally remarkable. His self-educated mind was of that stamp, which, born to somewhat better prospects, still retained enough of its natural gaiety to struggle with the melancholy occasioned by disappointment; it was modest and grateful; and the praise which Henry bestowed upon his wild poesy was repaid by a devotion, perhaps, the warmer from the ridicule which was lavished upon him by his less-gifted companions. He had never been so happy as when ranging the wilds with Ardourly, and they now bent

themselves to the steep of the mountain in the lively conversation of kindred spirits ; tempered, however, on the part of Kenneth, by a diffidence, of which no familiarity could make him forgetful.

After much labour, and when they had proceeded about half-way to the summit, they gained a small flat, where they stopped to breathe. In the midst of it was a little lake, surrounded by huge crags, and, above these, the irregular peaks of the mountain formed a scene peculiarly adapted for the residence of the strange being they were seeking. They looked round them, but could discover no traces of a habitation ; and, indeed, it was no easy matter to distinguish a solitary hovel in such a place, where, if seen, it might be taken for one of the numberless fragments around it.

“ It should be somewhere hereabouts,”

said Kenneth, “ and see yonder, behind these stones, if there is not the steam of the old girl’s kettle !”

They had some distance to clamber before they obtained a sight of the hut, which was constructed against a rock with the rude materials which nature had scattered near it in such abundance. It was at the end of a narrow defile, between two precipices, which completely enclosed it on every side but the entrance, so as to protect it from the winds which, otherwise, might have swept it off like a leaf in autumn. A small rivulet which issued from one side, and, crossing the path, disappeared at the other, added to the beauty and convenience of the spot ; and, by the side of this, was seen the most appropriate figure a painter could have introduced. She sat with her back towards the intruders, and was busily employed in washing rags.

Kenneth whispered, “ She has not often such a tender regard for her wardrobe ; I guess she’ll be looking out for a holiday. Poor body, it is a lonely life for her ; she is hunted out of society for a witch and a thief too, and she is only one of them.”

Ardourly could hardly help laughing at Kenneth’s compassionate defence of Kate’s character, but bade him be silent while they observed her more closely. The articles she had washed were spread beside her to dry, and she was now preparing to immerse one, which, from its quality, seemed to have been borrowed from a more fashionable owner. Kenneth looked over her shoulder to examine it, while she muttered to herself, with a tone of admiration, her praises on “ the flimsy bit,” which would assuredly be a charm against all future evil.

“ You may say that, Kitty Rankie,” interrupted Kenneth, “ for it has been pressed

to the bosom of the young lady of Brachenshaw."

Kate started up—"Eh, Kenneth, ye made me jump!"

"Ay, and you shall jump higher still, Kate; you shall be whipped for thieving. How came you by the young lady's scarf?"

"It will not be the young lady's scarf, Kenneth. You will be always full of fancies about her; as if nobody else had fine gear. Lay it down, ye song-scratching loon; lay it down, and make me a rhyme upon it, or else go and hang yourself."

"Not yet, Kate," he replied, producing a small whiskey bottle—"we must have a cup together first—take a swig, old girl; and make haste, before the devil runs away with you."

Kate drank deep. "Eh, Kenneth, it

takes one's breath away! Come in, ye puny lath, and I'll give you to eat. There is a bonny pullet in the pot."

"Where did you steal it? No, I will have nothing to say to it; you never say grace, for fear you should affront old Nick!"

The dame was going to reply, but, turning her head, perceived Ardourly, who briefly paid his compliments, and begged to be introduced to Mr. Wandering Willie. "He brought me a letter yesterday, and I forgot to pay him for his trouble."

Kate seemed rather confounded; but, after a moment's hesitation, declared she knew nothing of him, and had quite disinherited him for his ungodly life. Nevertheless, she would have no objection to take care of the money his honour might be pleased to leave."

"Ay, Kate, I always knew you were an

honest woman ; but look at this purse, and tell me, who sent him to the Spital of Glen-shee ?”

“ It was a brave purse,” Kate said, “ but she knew no more of the letter than she did of her wicked Willie, who might very likely be in the Tolbooth, if he was not hanged already.”

Henry left no means untried to ascertain the real history of his mysterious correspondence ; but the wily beldam, in the course of her predatory life, had gained too much experience in courts of law to be discomfited by cross-questions ; and our hero found, to his mortification, that he must return as ignorant as he came.

“ I have a great mind,” said he, as a last resource, “ to take you to Invercraig, and see what *he* can do with you.”

“ Do, and I ’ll go blithely—there is rare

cheer at the Laird's—Kenneth, give me my mantle ; and do not speer as if your young lady's bosom was beneath it still.—‘ See what the Laird will do with me,’ did his honour say ? We will make ourselves so fine, there will be no saying what he may do with me, now the mistress is gone.”

“ Well, well, Kate; we will save him the temptation ; and, for fear you should be too much for the morals of your friends, I must even make bold with your piece of finery.—Nay, never mind parting with it ; if I find it is not stolen, I will give you double the value —meantime, here is a crown to keep you honest.”

Kate begged to have Kenneth's bottle thrown into the bargain ; and Ardourly walked off, well satisfied with his purchase, which he meant to have an opportunity of restoring to the fair owner, the next day

“ And how came you, my good Kenneth, to know this belonged to Miss Colraith ?” The pensive countenance of the poet was lighted with a ray of enthusiasm. “ She was the first to encourage my humble muse, and her bright face will be the last I shall forget.— Every trifle that she has looked upon my memory holds sacred.”

“ But how could old Kate have got it ?”

Kenneth answered, that she was in the habit of going to Brachenshaw for charity, and, when she received one thing, generally stole another.

Ardourly had paid so long a visit that the Laird was at home before him, complaining bitterly that the high-fed fidget of his galloway had galled him worse than a travelling haberdasher on his first excursion, but the inconvenience did not take from the keenness of his wit, which was exercised,

without mercy, on the expedition of the following day.

“ But,” said he, as a wind up, “ are you aware that you have a rival in this affair; or did my fair cousin’s lowly admirer allow you undisputed possession of her cast-off apparel? That scarf is an old favourite, and has been the subject of his muse. I had once occasion to intrude within his sanctum, and gathered, amidst its poetical confusion, a few scattered fragments, which might not be intended for public admiration; but here they are—somewhat rough and incorrect, perhaps, but, as they are purloined from the workshop, it is reasonable to suppose they may not have received the last polish.”

The lines to the scarf came first, and ran as follows:—

THOU silken thing, so rich and rare,
How coyly art thou clinging there !

Now, wreathed in folds of maiden grace,
Thou seem 'st to woo the winds embrace ;
And now, with blush of varied stain,
Thou 'rt fluttering from its touch again ;
'Till, all confused with modest haste,
Thou'st wound thee round my lady's waist.

Oh, thou art like the meek-eyed maid
Whose snowy neck thou lovest to shade !
So fearful, and so passing fair,
We must not praise—yet how forbear ?

Thou flimsy silk, so closely press'd,
Tell me how beats my lady's breast—
If calmly sweet its pulses chime
To thoughts beyond yon starry clime,
Or vibrate to the wilder power
Of passion in its youthful hour.

If love the theme, oh timely say,
Her sighs are like the sighs of May,
And, while one budding hope they cherish,
Scatter an hundred more to perish !

If Heaven, oh let her ask the grace
Of him who wants a resting-place,
And leave, while barr'd from bliss above,
To worship where he dare not love!

Thou simple banner of my muse,
Well may I gaze upon thy hues !
No chieftain's standard ever drew
More captives in its train than you ;
And could I, when this heart is cold,
But sleep within thy sacred fold,
The victor, on his proudest seat,
Might envy me my winding-sheet.

CHAPTER V.

Upon her eye-lids many graces sate,
Under the shadow of her even browes,
Working belgardes and amorous retrate ;
And everie one her with a grace endowes,
And everie one with meeknesse to her bowes :
So glorious mirrour of celestiall grace,
And soveraine moniment of mortall vowes,
How shall frayle pen descriue her heavenly face,
For feare through want of skill her beauty to disgrace ?

Fairy Queen.

THE residence of Mr. M'Kay was about ten miles from Invercraig, on the Dee, nearly opposite Castleton. It was a tall, grey building, half house and half castle, situated on a knoll of considerable height; so as to command an extensive view of the curves of the river through its rugged and abrupt scenery. The ground beneath it was adorned with the varied tints of fir and weeping birch almost interminably, and, on one side overhung a deep ravine, down

which the small river Quoich dashed with an impetuosity that was heard at considerable distance. It was at noon-day when Ardourly, whose way had been on the opposite bank, forded the Dee nearly where it received the sparkling gush of this little stream. He looked up at the sunk windows of the old, non-descript tenement, expecting to discover a face, about which his curiosity increased at every step; but it was not to be so gratified; and he was ushered up stairs and down stairs, through long passages, and round sharp angles; circumnavigating all the alterations and additions which had been made to the ancient tower by the present owner and his predecessors for a dozen generations, till he found himself in the Laird's *ain* room, where he was left to observe and meditate till Miss Colraith could be advertised of his visit. The apart-

ment bore evident marks of the universal genius of the master; in one corner was an old spinet, in another a galvanic battery, in a third a patent medicine-chest, and, in a fourth, a large glass-case of dried butterflies and stuffed monkeys, with sundry specimens of shells, flowers, and monstrosities. The book-shelves were loaded with tattered volumes, containing the elements of all knowledge; but the best dates of the progressive advancement of second childhood, were afforded by the uninterrupted collection of pictures. Those which, from the appearance of the frames, had been the first to adorn the walls, were chosen with much taste; but, in proportion as the frames were seen to be more new, their contents became less and less valuable; and, where the gilding was recent, they were so perfectly *outré* as to render it almost incredible that the former

ones could have been selected by the same hand. This decay of mind was likewise visible in the numerous statues of all sizes, which were stuck in every direction; some good and some bad, some fit to be seen, and others not; many of them were clad, Hindoo fashion, with a small apron of rag, and many were turned with their faces to the wall. The whole were covered with dust, which had been accumulating for years, probably, lest they should be damaged in removing it; though this was a needless care, as every thing in the room was old, broken, and seemingly forgotten, excepting the case of natural curiosities and the paintings, the latter of which were doomed to be touched and re-touched with endless perseverance, whenever the weather or other causes withheld Mr. M'Kay from his outdoor researches.

Henry could not exactly reconcile it to his ideas of delicacy, that Miss Colraith should see him in this mass of nudity—this connoisseur's harem—and received, with satisfaction, a summons to make another circumambibus of the Brachenshaw chaos to the presence of its young lady. The journey was performed, in spite of Cupids and Venuses, without kicking over a single statue ; and the grace with which he was welcomed was quite enough to finish the work which had been so busily carried on by imagination. Jessie Colraith was the exact opposite to the being whom he had looked for ; and it was, perhaps, from this cause that she appeared so transcendently beyond her. He had expected to see the fair-haired, blue-eyed, genuine maid of Albyn, such as had formed the theme of song from Scotland's earliest minstrel ; but the slender, tall,

and elegant figure which he now beheld, was black-eyed and raven-haired—not that bold black eye whose lustre is the triumph of conscious captivation, but the mild, declining orb whose languid radiance shone through the long lashes like a tremulous moon-beam on the midnight waters. Her dark eye-brow was narrow but regular, and arched in singular contrast to the pure whiteness of a Grecian forehead; and, if her cheek wore not the flush of mountain-health, it was not sickly, for the scented blush from the virgin bosom of the white rose was breathing and mantling through its transparency. The *contour* of her countenance was altogether of a stamp with her forehead; but, when she spoke, it was a question which was the loveliest, her voice or her person: it dwelt on the mind like the tale that delighted our childhood—it was

plaintive as the thought of absent friends, and thrilling as the hope of meeting them. Henry seated himself by her with a conviction that he never had seen so fair a creature in his life. Her first care was to apologize for the time she had kept him waiting, and the apartment he had been conducted to, which she believed to be only a lumber-room ; not forgetting to assure him she had never seen the contents of it. But he was too much engaged in observing the maiden confusion of her appearance even to smile at the apprehension which occasioned it, and felt that he could gaze on her for ever, without thinking of one earthly thing besides. Unfortunately, such beatitude was not allotted to him, since he was limited to a morning visit, which could not, reasonably, comprise more than half an hour, and had, in that short time, to make

a proposal of very great importance. It was necessary, however, to watch the proper opportunity for commencing this subject, and, since he felt not a little anxious as to the result, he lost no time in hitting upon one which would lead to it.

He told her he had been a passenger with Mr. M'Kay and his party from England, and had the pleasure of calling to give a good account of them; this produced many inquiries respecting the additions to the Brachenshaw establishment; the younger of whom afforded a description with which she was perfectly charmed. "If," she said with a smile, "I am as lucky in the society of Mrs. M'Kay as I shall be in that of her niece, they will, indeed, be valuable acquisitions to our solitary habitation."

"Alas," replied Ardourly, "I fear you are of too sanguine a disposition! It is hardly

to be expected that you should find them *both* such as I have described Miss Grey. But will Miss Colraith permit me to speak without disguise?"

"Can you doubt it? my curiosity must naturally be great to hear your opinion; and, as I have not yet had an opportunity of forming any great friendship for my new relation, I shall not quarrel with you even if it *should* fall short of my hopes."

"I speak then," said Henry, who perceived that the distance between him and his fair companion was likely to be compromised in a confidential conversation, even before he got to the object of his mission, "I speak then with a full confidence in that assurance."

With such encouragement, he did not fail to do justice to his cause, by enlarging upon Mrs. M'Kay's various qualities

as forcibly as he could ; watching earnestly to see if Miss Colraith's horror was proportionate to his exertions. Two or three times, she fancied, from his pausing, that the picture was finished, but found he was only considering where it would admit of an additional touch. At last, she laughingly broke in upon him, and declared she would hear no more last words ; persuaded, as she was, that he was actuated by nothing but malice.—“ For how,” said she, “ is it possible that, in an acquaintance of three days, you should have observed as many disagreeable qualities as any one else could have discovered in twice the number of years ?”

“ You do me as much injustice as you suppose me to be guilty of towards Mrs. M‘Kay. All the qualities, good or bad—”

“ Nay, you have not mentioned one good one.”

“ All the qualities, then, that I have enumerated, are either what I observed myself, or what must, infallibly, be the companions of such. In short, I have not the least doubt that your new relation will make you perfectly miserable, unless—”

“ I am delighted you have a remedy to propose!”

“ Unless you will condescend to listen to a proposal from your excellent friend, Invercraig; which is simply this—that you will permit him to offer you a home where his greatest study will be to ensure your happiness. The jealousy of the new mistress of Brachenshaw—”

“ Pardon me for interrupting you. If she is the person you describe her, there will be the greater need of my attendance on the aged friend who has taken care of my infancy; and, whatever may be the treatment

I meet with, I shall submit to it with patience."

" But, supposing, Miss Colraith, that Mr. M'Kay himself should approve of the plan?"

" Why, even then, I could not leave his fast declining years to the care of strangers. I have a debt of gratitude to the poor old man, which must bind me to him closer as his infirmities increase. For the kind proposal, of which you are the bearer, and the earnestness with which you seem inclined to press it, pray give and receive my best thanks."

She paused; for the bare idea of leaving her old relation had filled her eyes with tears; and Ardourly gazed on her, now, with admiration of her sentiments as well as her beauty. " I will not press any thing that displeases you, but, still, I must lament the

disappointment your answer will occasion our good friend, Invercraig."

"Tell him," said Jessie, ashamed, and smiling at her tears, that in all things else he may command me—provided he sends another messenger: for, I protest, I shall be ashamed to see Mr. Ardourly after listening to so much of his calumny."

"I shall, undoubtedly, deliver the latter part of your message, for so great a disagreement on our first acquaintance is not likely to be the forerunner of much harmony; and so, to prevent a reconciliation, which might be productive of a great many disagreeables to us both, and a great many long Brachenshaw rides to myself, I will wish you good morning—‘nursing my wrath to keep it warm.’" With this he playfully drew the scarf from his bosom, and then more care-

fully replaced it. Miss Colraith's colour rose high, and as quickly receded. "Tell me," she said, "where did you find that scarf?"

"Truly, I fear to tell you, unless you will promise not to indict me under the black act for keeping unholy company; but, since you look so anxious about it, I will even confess that I obtained it from a sibyl, who foretold, that whenever I restored it to the lawful owner, my heart would accompany it. Will Miss Colraith kindly assist me in the discovery of the lady?" But he soon saw that she was really agitated, and hastened to tell her the true circumstances under which he became possessed of it; not without some surprise at the earnestness with which she treated the subject. She listened with eagerness—"That scarf—I had lost it—it was my mother's—She leant her head upon her hand

for a moment, and, when she raised it, her countenance had gained a constrained composure. She smiled, but her smile had more of pain than mirth in it. “ And so I find Mr. Ardourly a follower of cunning women! of course, he went to hear what destiny was in store for him—what lady was sighing in secret, and by what valorous deeds she might be won?”

“ I went about a much less important matter; and one which required much less skill to satisfy me, but I was only successful in obtaining that valued relic; of which, however, I must not monopolize the whole credit, but content myself to share it with my friend Kenneth; whose humble genius, I fear, you have patronised to a dangerous extent—and now, farewell.”

“ Let me repeat to you, Mr. Ardourly, that I am much indebted to you for both

the objects of your visit—and—and, perhaps, you may not nurse your wrath so long but that, when you next come this way, you may call, to form a better opinion of Mrs. M'Kay."

" And a worse one of Miss Colraith, I hope ; or I shall never return to Invercraig." With this polite speech he was wheeling out of the room, when an unlucky Cupid (for the statues and pictures abounded here as in the other apartment, though they displayed less *natural* beauty) received such a salutation from his foot, as quickly caused him to vacate his pedestal with the loss of both bow and quiver. Ardourly looked aghast ; and Jessie's dark eye sparkled with amusement. " If," said she, " the little god has not his revenge for such an insult I shall, indeed, be surprised."

" Alas," replied Henry, he is revenged

already ! but what is to be done ? I fear I have less wit to repair the damage than awkwardness in causing it."

" Do not be uneasy—I assure you Mr. M'Kay will consider the little fellow much more valuable from the accident. He looks considerably more antique and precious than he did. My poor father (as I am used to call him) has not the taste he once possessed in these things—Look round, and see the numerous tokens of returning childishness—like an infant, he must imitate all that he sees ; and in such a way ! Here are partly the results of a visit to the elegant drawing-room of Invercraig. The tables adorned with festoons of chandelier drops ; the bits of painted glass in the windows, the baubles and play-things in every direction ! All these are insurmountable reasons why I should not leave him entirely in the hands of strangers

—I have learnt all his ways ; to humour all his whims ; and, indeed, I have learnt to love him sincerely. When it shall please Heaven to take him, I shall feel a void in my heart which I dread to look upon !”

“ Whenever that event takes place, I hope the proposal, of which I have been the unsuccessful bearer, will meet with less opposition—Farewell.”

They parted without more words ; and Ardourly mounted his horse with a palpitation he had never felt before ; and a consciousness that his stay had been much longer than it ought to have been.

The way passed unheeded, for his thoughts were employed on too interesting a theme to attend to the beauties his eyes occasionally glanced on ; and the necessity he had been under of belabouring the quadruped he had brought from Edinburgh, had made that ex-

ercise so habitual to him, that his high-mettled steed brought him, much within the hour, to the gates of Invercraig.

" My dear Sir," said he, " I am charmed beyond belief, and disappointed beyond expression ! never did I see a creature more lovely or more uncomplying."

The Laird jocularly admitted that the result of the embassy was no other than he had looked for, considering the prudence of the young lady, and the appearance of the ambassador. Nevertheless, there was no reason to be appalled ; for a woman was surely to be won in a fortnight if a man was to be caught in half an hour ; and his failure was, in reality, a matter of congratulation, as it would afford an inexhaustible source of amusement for his idle hours, in contriving interviews, and eluding the jealous vigilance of Mrs. M'Kay ; of which he would have

been deprived, had his wishes been gratified in Miss Colraith's change of residence.—Henry still thought that the latter arrangement would have been preferable, but promised to take advantage of Mr. Ayrton's suggestions without delay.

CHAPTER VI.

'Tis now the raven's bleak abode ;
'Tis now the apartment of the toad ;
And there the fox securely feeds,
And there the poisonous adder breeds,
Conceal'd in ruins, moss, and weeds ; }
While, ever and anon, there falls
Huge heaps of hoary moulder'd walls.
Yet time has seen, that lifts the low,
And level lays the lofty brow,
Has seen this broken pile complete,
Big with the vanity of state : }
But transient is the smile of fate !
A little rule, a little sway,
A sunbeam in a winter's day,
Is all the proud and mighty have .
Between the cradle and the grave.

DYER.

THE next morning Ardourly awakened himself by humming a little air, to which Kenneth had written the following scrap :—

Oh, thou art very young, and very lone
And pale, and meek,
And ling'ring sorrow sheds a pensive tone
Upon thy cheek !
'Tis like the shadows of the eve, that meet
With gentle chill,

And make the wilding blossoms, all so sweet,
Breathe sweeter still.
But thou complainest with a softer sigh
Than infant sleep ;
And smilest—oh, so patiently ! that I
Could gaze and weep.
The waves will glide more bright where rocks are bare
And desolate,
And thy young soul becomes more purely fair
For thy bleak fate.

It would be a pity, he thought, that so fair a creature should be denied a comforter ; and so deep was his commiseration, that, though he rose with an intention to shoot, he, unwittingly, arrayed himself in boots and spurs. There was too much trouble in rectifying the mistake, and he determined upon a ride, though, from his silence on the subject, it is likely he was undecided as to the direction of it. The horse, however, chose to take the course he had been the day before ; and the rider, finding, at last, that he

was far advanced upon the road, thought it would be no harm to call at Brachenshaw to express Mr. Ayrton's disappointment at the rejection of his offer.

Miss Colraith, he was informed, had walked out to the Gleneldie ruins, about half a mile distant, and thither he directed his steps. The path conducted him through a low and gently-ascending coppice of hazel and groundling ash, canopied in many places by the loftier and more delicate branches of the weeping birch. Years had elapsed since the tangled grass and intrusive boughs had been restrained in their luxuriance, and they now almost obstructed the passage, conveying a melancholy idea of the change from former days, and the cheerless existence of the present orphan possessor. There was once a road, and a well-trodden one, to the Tower of Gleneldie; there was alms for the poor;

hospitality for the stranger, and protection for the oppressed. The only being who was now heard rustling through the foliage was the timid maid who sought the hall of her fathers to hear the winds whistle through its ruined walls, and shed the tear of meekness on their mouldering fragments.

With thoughts like these, Ardourly emerged from the coppice, and found himself within a short distance of Gleneldie. A bold range of the Grampians reared their giant heads in the clear blue sky behind it ; and the Dee, and its beautiful valley, lay extended in the front, fading more and more tenderly in the distance, till the enthusiast might search in vain for the undistinguishable horizon.

The broken parts which remained were indicative of a former magnificence, such as Ardourly had seldom witnessed, in the rude-

ness of Scotland's early architecture. A lofty archway which formed the centre of an outward wall, and a square corner tower, were the most perfect specimens; the latter of which was laid open on one side, and shewed an interior black and scathed by fire. Having passed within these, the eye was appalled by the sight of the principal building, about half of which was still standing, and presented a most frightful object of violence. The broken sides but too clearly shewed that they had not yielded to the infirmity of their age, but had bowed to the systematic battering of a more ruthless enemy; and the smoky hue of all within, bore lamentable testimony to the means used for its utter desolation. It was difficult, from its present state, to form any idea of its former shape, of which the magnitude was alone to be ascertained; but the variety of antic forms

which it assumed—pyramids inclining as if in the very act of falling—huge arches apparently supported by nothing, and high and fantastic windows, in which nothing but the heavens were discernible—was more interesting from its confusion, and afforded ample scope for the imagination to fill up the spaces, and connect the tottering extremities, according to its pleasure. But Ardourly had speculations still more interesting than these. Every echo of his footstep, as he entered the ruin, fell heavily upon his heart; for he trod on the hearth, of whose violation his own father had been the instrument, and how could the dark eye of Jessie behold him in such a place? He thought several times of going back to Brachenshaw, and awaiting her return; but when he had come to a final resolution of doing so, it was too late. Having proceeded through several scorched

apartments, he came to the large arched door-way which admitted him into the great banqueting room, the walls of which, though much broken, were still sufficient to exclude the broad day-light. It was a mournful gloom; but strikingly contrasted by the streams of sunshine which fell obliquely through the long narrow casement niches, like golden rafters which had dropped from their horizontal position. The ground was strewed thickly with the large grey stones of which the building was composed, and which had dropped from their lofty places, even like the years of their exiled lord, unmarked and unlamented—save by one. There were also many rough specimens of disjointed sculpture piled up in various places by the hand of chance, but so overgrown and defiled with the accumulating earth, that they formed only the thrones from whence, unmolested,

the rank nettle might wave its dusky dominion. It was before one of these that the fair form of Jessie was bending in pensive contemplation. He could not turn back, as he had thought to have done—in no situation could she have bound him more immovably to her presence—though he felt that in no situation could he have been an object of less pleasure. He had not stood long before he was gratified by another glance of those dark eyes which had never left his thoughts since he first looked upon them. Jessie started at perceiving her unexpected visitor, with a blush not unmixed with pleasure; and Henry found, to his satisfaction, that there was no immediate call for the excuse of his second appearance: indeed, it is not very improbable that, from a feeling something like agitation, he had forgotten it.

“ Mr. Ardourly,” she said, “ has more

charity than I could have ventured to give him credit for." There was an effort at gaiety in her manner, but the traces of tears were in her eyes.

" And why," returned Henry, " should I have been denied the credit of seeing where I could be most happy?"

Jessie smiled, and shaking her head, replied, that there could be little happiness with the forlorn damsel of Brachenshaw. " But it is not my intention to make you a sharer in my foolish reveries. Such entertainment is but ill suited to a visit, from which, in consideration of the distance you have come and the goodness which brought you, you ought to derive nothing but pleasure. Perhaps you will let me lead you to more lively subjects of meditation. Nay, I am used to walk without assistance, but, lest I should be a sufferer from too much obstinacy, I will not refuse your arm."

“ Alas, I have too much reason to share in the thoughts which occupy your solitude.”

Jessie turned upon him with a look of reproachful kindness, and delicately avoided a reply, by hastily quitting a scene which caused such painful reflections. ... It was long before either of them thought their ramble had been sufficiently protracted, and, when they arrived at Brachenshaw, they perceived that their acquaintance had imperceptibly advanced far beyond the usual growth of two days. Jessie’s spirits had gradually resumed their usual standard, and even attained to something beyond it; and, as they entered the house, she bade Henry congratulate himself that his next visit would, perhaps, be more amusing, as it would probably be received by Mrs. M’Kay. “ How could I,” she said, “ have kept you in suspense so long, when I ought to have known

your anxiety to hear of her ! If I were not aware of the long ride before you, I would ask you to stay and see her, for I expect the party this evening.”

“ Then the best advice I can give, is to let me conduct you to Invercraig before they can arrive.”

“ You remind me of another piece of forgetfulness. I have said not a word on the subject of our kind friend’s proposal, though I am conscious I did not say half enough yesterday. But I have written him a note, of which I know you will obligingly be the bearer.”

“ Undoubtedly ; though I would much rather be the bearer of yourself. Particularly as the looks of such a companion would ensure me a safe journey home.”

“ I hope your safety has no need of such a feeble assistant.”

“ I do not know. I am strangely menaced; but I know of no enemy I can have made.”

“ If I thought you had one in Scotland, I should be very much alarmed.” She turned to him with the note, for which she had been some time searching a drawer, and the stooping attitude had brought a colour to her cheeks which made her look more bewitchingly than ever, while she added—“ I think I could answer for it that you have no ill-wisher in Scotland, and are not likely to have any. But you must take care of yourself amongst our disturbed hills, for the sake of your friends and—and acquaintance, for I fear I must not yet hope to rank amongst the former.”

Henry ventured to press her hand at parting, and was gradually raising it to his lips, when it was hastily withdrawn to present

him with the note which still lay upon the table. "How can we be so forgetful," she said, "here is my commission."

"Let it remain; it will be an excuse for me to call to-morrow."

"If you want an excuse, you will have a much better one in a civil inquiry after your friend, the bride."

"Most true; I shall be all anxiety till I am assured of her well-being." He was more cautious this day in his progress out of the room, and, to Jessie's admiration, mounted his horse without causing any dilapidation whatever.

He had staid so long, that it was again necessary for the Laird's trusty steed to put his best leg foremost; and hill and vale vanished quickly by him. His spirits were high as the mettle of the animal beneath him, for he was flushed with admiration and

hope, and a thousand visions of future happiness flitted about his breast. In this mood he continued for half his ride, when he slackened pace to breathe his horse, and took the opportunity of looking at his watch to ascertain if it were possible to reach Invercraig by the dinner-hour. As he returned it to its place, his eye caught the corner of Miss Colraith's letter sticking out of his waistcoat pocket; and, as every thing from such a hand was interesting, curiosity prompted him to examine the address. He gazed on it long and intently, with a mixture of doubt and surprise, and replaced it in his pocket, biting his lips with sudden inquietude. In a moment, it was re-produced, and again replaced, and the horse was permitted to saunter along at his own pleasure, while his rider was involved in a deep fit of abstraction. The first glance at the writing had shown him the

strong resemblance it bore to the billets of his mysterious adviser, and was followed by a train of circumstances which he was astonished he had not noticed before—namely, the dark and, seemingly, involuntary expressions of Miss Colraith's guardian, in whose hidden reasons for them she might fairly be supposed to participate ; the subsequent discovery of her knowledge of the old woman, Kitty Rankie, whose son delivered the last note ; and her great confusion at it. He rode a considerable distance conning over these corroborative facts, and the more he pondered the less he doubted that he had fixed the letters upon the right author ; which point being established, the question was what must be the connexions of a young lady by which she could come at such information, and what must be her obligations to them which made such conceal-

ment necessary in the communication of it. It surrounded her with a perilous mystery ; and he turned, with impatience, to the fairer side of the question. Had he seen any thing in her manner which would authorize such a belief as he entertained, or heard any thing but what tended to raise his admiration in the highest degree ? Must not the cause of the advice he had received three days before, still exist ? and, if so, was it likely that she would be less anxious for his safety, now that she knew him, than she was before she had ever seen him ? He hoped not—yet she had not only omitted to give him any further cautions, seeing how little he regarded the former ones, but had told him she did not believe there was a person in Scotland of whom he need be apprehensive. This reasoning Ardourly thought as conclusive as the former, and, when assisted by his ardent

endeavours to acquiesce in its justice, finally dispelled the disagreeable sensations which had so long retarded his journey. He again breathed freely, (though he still thought the coincidences which favoured his first belief very remarkable,) and his gallop was resumed to save his distance at the dinner-table.

He had not gone far, however, before he was accosted by a cavalier, meeting him ; and he instantly recognised the good-humoured officer who had assisted him in the discussion of the game-cock at Glenshee. The young men were happy to meet, and entered into a friendly conversation, in which the soldier did not deny that his short experience of a Highland life had materially altered his opinion of it. “ Though I should have liked it better,” he said, “ had I come

on more honourable duty, or could have quartered myself on old M'Kay yonder. Report speaks of his hundred and fiftieth cousin as a being who rivals the planets, as bright and as near to Heaven. I have peeped about the ancient fabric every day, but to no purpose. There is no getting a glimpse at her."

Ardourly felt an inward satisfaction at his own superior fortune. "And how," he asked, "did you come at this information?"

"Oh, every Goody-two-shoes in the country is full of her!—I 'faith, I think the best plan for an introduction is, to apply to her as a reduced gentleman. We had the devil's own fortune to miss her at the Spital the other day, for she had been there all the morning to see a sick old woman."

Henry turned his eye quickly on the

speaker, the lines on the window immediately recurring to his mind, while the latter continued :

“ By-the-by, you have not forgotten the man who found his way into our company that night? I verily believe he was the identical person who landed from the privateer, and that I frightened him with his own description; for, the next day, he was again seen at Kinkairn, from whence he took a horse which he left at a small fishing village, north of Aberdeen, and beyond this he cannot be traced.”

“ How, may I ask, did you learn all this?”

“ Why, when I got to Castleton, I found, accidentally, that he had been seen about there for some days; nobody knew him, and the accounts I had heard, added to what I had seen, induced me to follow him. I

lost him, however, at the place I mention, and have little doubt he went on board the Frenchman, which is still on that part of the coast."

Henry contracted his brows for an instant, and observed it was very strange; adding, "I wish you had been more successful. If chance or duty calls you towards Invercraig, let me see you. I ride against time."

They turned their horses in different directions; and Henry had heard enough to furnish an ample store of unpleasant thoughts for the rest of his ride. "She knew no one in Scotland disposed against me—why no—she said true enough—the person was gone—the person I suspected. He has been living near her too—close by her—and she alone!" Thus was all his reasoning in favour of Miss Colraith, overturned in a moment. He considered her proved to be the writer of the let-

ters beyond all controversion, and again asked himself what must be her connexion with that man, that, being in possession of such information, she should screen him from detection. Could he be any thing less than her lover? and could her conduct be occasioned by any thing but a dread of his attempts upon his (Ardourly's) life, to ensure to her and himself the inheritance of the Invercraig demesnes? In this happy mood he arrived at home.

The bell for dinner had not yet rung, and he retired to his room, well pleased to steal there unobserved by the Laird, for he knew himself to be too much perturbed, at the time; to appear otherwise, and was desirous that what had transpired should be confined to his own knowledge; so jealous was he that any one else should think ill of the fair Jessie, though he was compelled to do so himself.

CHAPTER VII.

Believe not what the landmen say,
Who tempt with doubts thy constant mind ;
They 'll tell thee, Sailors, when away,
In every port a mistress find.
Yes, yes, believe them when they tell thee so,
For thou art present wheresoe'er I go. GAY.

AS Henry descended, the heavy duett of a brace of bells announced the dinner, and the coming of Captain Raleigh, whom he hastened to meet with as unclouded a brow as circumstances would permit.

“ Your friend is in season,” said the Laird as Ardourly passed him—“ Heaven send he may bring you good news from Brachenshaw, for, as I think, you have not been there to-day.” A speech which was uttered with a

lurking expression of humour, which inferred not exactly the same meaning.

Raleigh had every reason to be satisfied with his reception at Invercraig, and soon found himself quite at home with its worthy owner, who, as soon as the wine and whiskey were introduced, desired to know how his journey had speeded from Edinburgh. It had, indeed, caused him much amusement ; the Laird laughed and rubbed his hands, and even Ardourly, absent as he was, could not help enjoying the whimsical history ; which, however, we are sorry we cannot give in the humorous words of the narrator.

From the Scots capital they were to proceed homeward the day after they landed, but the old family vehicle, which was to convey them not coming in time, and when it did arrive, exhibiting the dolorous effects of an upset, they were under the necessity of

submitting to the decrees of fate, and the extortion of waiters, till the damage could be repaired. During this delay, the old gentleman did not forget to make good use of Raleigh as a crutch to assist him to pawn-brokers and picture-dealers, and a judge to direct his purchases; and the veneration his abilities were held in, from the numerous rarities he discovered, made his opinion absolute in all things whatsoever.

But not thus did he rise in favour with the Lady of Brachenshaw. She never could see two young persons together without feeling an extraordinary curiosity to observe what they would be doing, and since in the present instance, her conjectures of a commencing attachment were not far from the truth, she was, of course, not less upon the *qui vive* than usual. The vigilance of the sailor was quite as active, and never

did fondest lovers or veriest foes inspect the movements of each other with more minuteness. But, in defiance of her behaviour, which was not always the politest, there was quite sufficient in Miss Grey to reconcile him to trifles, and more particularly so when he reflected that a patient endurance of such ills was the best revenge for them.

“ How happy I shall be to see our charming young friend Mr. Ardourly,” said the good lady, “ he really has not his equal. Some people are so vulgar and boisterous !”

“ My dear Madam, I beg pardon for doing such violence to your delicate nerves. I will make love to your niece in a whisper.”—He kept his word, while the over-obliging aunt was tortured perfectly to his satisfaction.

At length the lumbering family machine, with four stout posters, drove up to the door of the hotel. The first concern was to see the safe package of Mr. M'Kay's treasures, which Raleigh took care should only leave room for the new-married folks, having for himself and Miss Grey planned a ride upon the box. But, as soon as this arrangement was made known to Mrs. M'Kay, she launched her thunders against it most determinately, vowing that if Mr. M'Kay did not leave his pictures and rubbish to go by a cart, she would seek another conveyance. The naturalist grinned, and begged she would please herself; she was welcome to stay behind; but, as for his *papiliones*, which had cost him so much more trouble to obtain, he could, by no means, suffer them to travel under any auspices but his own. The lady did not easily yield up the point,

but, when she found the case was hopeless, she declared that, rather than the fine skin of her niece should suffer from too great an exposure to the air, she would herself accompany Captain Raleigh on the dickey. Such a manœuvre was totally unexpected, and the brave Captain was in utter despair. Fortune, however, had no such misery in store for him, for, as soon as his persecutrix had climbed to her ricketty station, it was found that she occupied considerably too much of it to admit a companion. She was accordingly assisted down again, expostulating with her spouse upon the necessity of his taking the box himself, or desiring Captain Raleigh to find his way as he could. The old gentleman replied, that the advice might be very good, though he could not follow it. In the first place, riding on the box did not agree with him; and, in the

next, the Captain had joined their party by her own invitation, and she must abide by the consequences. For his own part, he thought him a good lad; and if he was a little daft, he certainly had a decent knack at caricature, and, moreover, an excellent taste in painting and whiskey. In fine, Raleigh gained his end, and as soon as Emily, who had stood a silent and blushing spectator of her aunt's discomfiture, was handed aloft, the ancient rumble-tumble dashed down the Union-street with a rattle that attracted universal notice, displaying the flaming family arms, emblazoned in about the same compass as those of an achievement. A specimen of the fine arts, supposed to be touched off by the owner himself, from the peculiar satisfaction with which he contemplated the lookers-on.

As soon as the equipage had cleared the

town, the drivers were desired to proceed at a more moderate pace, for the thumps and bumps, with which they had bounded over the stones, agreed so ill with the arts and sciences, that they began to tumble about the ears of the inside passengers without mercy. Whether this ill stowage was a plan of Captain Raleigh's is unknown, but he certainly derived much satisfaction from it, since it would make the day's journey two or three hours longer in the accomplishment, and, consequently, give him as much more time in his siege upon the heart of Miss Grey. Mrs. M'Kay, at first, caused some little interruption by obligingly poking her head out of the window to see if they were comfortable, and to tell her niece she might give Captain Raleigh more room ; but having two or three times, by such movements, committed sore dilapidations on the can-

vass and glass cases, she was recommended to desist from her kind solicitude, with an assurance that the lad and the child Aimlie would make themselves quite comfortable enough without her assistance. Thus was a fair field presented to the address of the valorous Captain, who, sailor-like, forgetting all base considerations of money, and all cold calculations of the produce of nothing put to nothing, manfully pushed the war up to the very gates of a proposal, and boldly ventured therein. The timid girl became pale and agitated, and entreated he would not press the subject.

“ I cannot, indeed I cannot, let you talk in this manner without my aunt’s knowledge ! ”

“ Shall I ask her permission ? I will jump down and do it in a moment.”

Emily laughed in the midst of her distress—
“ And much good would you gain by such

an application! Besides, I am not aware that my behaviour towards you would warrant such a one."

" Well, never mind ; we are in the country where these things are settled very cleverly, and it is my intention to marry you against your inclination, (which, of course, will disarm your aunt of all wrath towards you,) and then I will make my own peace with her when I have nothing else to do."

His gaiety set her terrors at rest, for it spared her the confusion of a more precise confession, from which she had feared there was no escape—

" And forth they pass, a well consorted payre."

marking each mile they travelled by some fresh advancement in the sentiments they dared not discuss.

At every stoppage Mrs. M'Kay did not

fail to read her niece a lecture upon some new impropriety in her conduct towards Raleigh ; begging, at the same time, to know the whole history of their conversation, from beginning to end. Such an examination, from such a quarter, might be expected to produce equivocation ; but Miss Grey, though mild in the extreme, possessed a spirit which would not brook the everlasting inquiries of injurious suspicion, and merely answered that when Captain Raleigh used conversation which she conceived it improper to listen to, she would take care to inform her. The temper of Mrs. M'Kay, with all its pestering qualities, was, luckily for those about her, not easily ruffled, and, besides this, she was so proud of her protégée's beauty, that she had made it a rule never to be angry with her, or allow her to experience a moment's uneasiness, lest that prime qualification should

be injured. From Miss Grey, therefore, who really loved and despised her at the same time, she did not scruple to apply to Raleigh himself; and here, indeed, she was much more successful, for our sailor chose to amuse himself by avowing much more than had really happened.

“ Can you think, my dear madam, that, seated so long by so much perfection, I could help feeling and expressing the effect it had upon me? or can you fancy that the numberless comparisons you have been polite enough to draw between my friend Ar-dourly and myself (always giving me the advantage) should not have weighed with the sensitive heart of a young lady who sets so much value upon your judgment? I should have called myself the veriest blockhead if we had not plighted our faith long ago. Upon my word, I do not know but we are

married already—a man never knows when he is married in Scotland—a wink or a whisper, they say, is quite sufficient. But if you will allow me, I will ask Miss Grey what she thinks of it, and either expedite the ceremony, or, if it is past, kneel down and implore your blessing."

Mrs. M'Kay had just wit enough to perceive that he was laughing at her, though she doubted not that he had gone great lengths. She represented that her niece was very young, and expressed a piteous hope that he would maintain a proper regard for her inexperience; adding a long-winded compliment to his discretion, and finishing with a desire to know how her beautiful Emily was thought of by Mr. Ardourly.

"Thought of, madam? why he thinks she is just made for the wife of a sailor." And thus did their conversations generally end;

with amusement on one side and vexation on the other.

Having brought them safe to Brachenshaw, (where he saw a young lady, whom he allowed to be almost as beautiful as Miss Grey herself), Raleigh was obliged to wait till Mrs. M'Kay had penned an invitation for his friend's company to dinner on the earliest convenience; which same compliment would not, perhaps, have been extended to himself, had not the old man interposed his commands to that effect; in consequence of an affirmation on the part of the sailor, that, with a very few touches of the pencil, he could convert a full length likeness of that respected gentleman, mounted on a gallant grey, into an admirable representation of Death on the Pale Horse.

Henry bungled through his scarcely legible epistle with the most bitter complaints; for the kind lady had crammed in so many

inquiries after his health, so many praises of her niece, and so many *et ceteras*, that he despaired of giving her an answer under three sides at least.

" And now, my good sir," said he, addressing Mr. Ayrton, " since I am going to make my escape, to arrange with Kenneth for our shooting to-morrow, I hope you will enjoy your laugh at me before I return; for I must needs confess, that I left Brachenshaw to-day, just before Raleigh, and the rest arrived there. Perhaps, I should not be so candid, if I had not, like him, brought a letter from thence."

" A letter! and from Jessie Colraith! no wonder you kept it so long in your pocket—Come, Captain Raleigh, let us drink to his amendment—You bear your misfortunes like a man, but my young chieftain there is crazed already!"

Ardourly vanished, leaving the two to their

laudable toast, while he climbed the spiral staircase to Kenneth's abode, which was situated, as poets' should be, at the top of the tower, with only the inconvenience of being just under the clock. In the midst of his small apartment, and surrounded by the heterogeneous implements of both his avocations, sat the unaccompanied inmate, "framing loose numbers," and polishing the lock of his gun. Henry desired he would not disturb himself, and taking a seat opposite to him, said he had come to see how geniuses employed themselves.

"I am afraid, Master Henry, you will see little worth the trouble of climbing that cork-screw staircase. You find me nursing my only hope—that some of my fancies may be breathed in my living ear by lips that I love, and some survive for the harmony of the mountain side when the bard is forgotten."

“ Alas, Kenneth, why is the sombre mood so peculiar to the sons of song? Is it really, as your own words express it, that

They soar so far above their fate,
The joys which all the world is wooing,
Are seen in such diminished state,
They do not think them worth pursuing?”

Kenneth felt pleased, and proud that Ardourly should think his lines worth repeating. “ The sentiment,” he said, “ was only a poetical fiction, for, as far as regarded himself, he had every thing to make him happy. Those of his fanciful calling must not be judged from appearances, for they were buoyed up with ideal delight, while their real situation might be poverty and misery, and they were sunk in despondency in the midst of comfort. They were the persons whose fortunes they recorded—the favoured

lover, the triumphant chief, or their opposites."

Kenneth and his poetry being sufficiently discussed, Ardourly came to the point which had really brought him ; and begged, in an off-hand manner (that he might not attach to the request an importance which would excite curiosity), that he would go, the next morning, to Loch-na-Gar, and use his best discretion to obtain more satisfactory communications from the old dame. There was, however, no need of the trouble, for he had met her, that day, trudging northward, with her whole household goods upon a donkey. Knowing Henry's anxiety, though not the cause, he had again examined her relative to her son, but to no purpose ; nor could he find whither she was moving, though he supposed it was on an expedition to some neighbourhood where there was more to

purloin. Thus was Ardourly obliged to return to his friends, with the conviction that the circumstance foremost in his mind must, probably, remain a mystery, unless Jessie Colraith herself should choose to explain it.

The post was just come in, (a matter of some moment where it came but seldom and irregularly,) and all three became busily engaged with their letters.

“ What says my friend, Sandy Anderson, merchant of Aberdeen?” said the Laird, as he broke the last seal. Having glanced it over, he handed it to Raleigh, saying it was more in his way, as it related chiefly to his own element. It was, indeed, a disastrous catalogue of losses by privateers, which frequented that coast in greater abundance than ever; but the damage occasioned by all the rest was, comparatively, trifling to the dar-

ing and dexterous mischief perpetrated daily by one individual. This was a corvette of the largest size, which, from the promptness it displayed in intercepting almost every vessel of consequence from that place, was supposed to have agents on shore, from whom it received information as to their course. It was the same which, some little while since, was seen to land one of its crew, and had long been an occasional visitant in the North Sea, having, three years before, fought a smart action with Captain Raleigh.

“ From which,” said Raleigh, “ we separated by mutual consent, to bind up our splinters, and lost sight of each other in a gale of wind, before we could re-commence. Provoking, to be aground when there is so much prize-money afloat !”

But just as he was lamenting his hard for-

tune, Ardourly, who, in a reverie about his friends in England, or his friends at Bra-chenshaw, or on board the privateer, was swinging the post-bag to and fro, unexpectedly tossed out another letter, which Raleigh caught up, and found addressed to himself. “ Egad,” said he, “ it looks as if it came from the Admiralty—Suppose it should be an appointment to a ship !” To his surprise and delight, he had supposed rightly ; and, by his own merit, and the exertion of friends, was once more

“ To move the monarch of the peopled deck,”

whither he was to repair in the course of the ensuing week.

Considering his weighty reasons for remaining a little longer in Scotland, this order for his return, which was so neck and neck with his coming, was, indeed,

rather unopportun[e]. But Raleigh was of a very comfortable disposition, and never disdained the happiness in his power, was it ever so brief. The whole joy of a life, he said, was mostly collected by snatches, and none could pretend the blossoms were less sweet because they were gathered singly. With this maxim he arranged with himself, since he could command but one visit to Brachenshaw, to make it as pleasant and convenient as possible. He would go there, as invited, and sleep there, as uninvited; make merry with its old master, and love to his new niece; and then, being ten miles on his road, pursue his journey to the south, with love behind and glory before him.

CHAPTER VIII.

If with the breathing of the gentle wind,
An aspen leafe but shaked on the tree,
If bird or beast stir'd in the bushes blinde,
Thither he spurr'd, thither he rode to see.

FAIREFAX'S TASSO.

No longer seek him east or west,
And search no more the forest thorough ;
For wandering in the night so dark,

He * * * * * * * * * * LOGAN.

ON the appointed day the young men appeared at Brachenshaw, and were received with pleasure by Mr. M'Kay and the young ladies : the civilities of Mrs. M'Kay being, as before, confined to Ardourly, on whom she lavished her welcomes so plentifully that it was clear she was ignorant the thicker such daubs are laid on, the more easily they

are seen through. It is but just, however, to observe, that if her understanding was not more bright than usual, the want of amendment was not wholly without excuse, as the treatment her husband had adopted to effect a favourable revolution had, without impugning its possibility of ultimate success, reduced her to a very deplorable state of mental as well as bodily exhaustion.

Her first *entré* upon her new premises had been marked by as many fractured victims as the march of a conquering leader. The long dark passages which had been so dexterously threaded by Ardourly, were not always to be travelled with impunity ; for, as Mrs. M'Kay very properly observed, statues are the most awkward people in the world, and never make way for any body. Alexander the Great was the first to impede her progress, for which Alexander the Great got

his neck broke, and the full force of her charms was received in the arms of Julius Cæsar, who, staggering with his insupportable happiness, bore down the stately figures of Brutus, Cassius, and Mark Antony. As soon as this merciless massacre was made known to Mr. M'Kay, the only culprit upon whom he could inflict punishment was found guilty of being too heavy and too clumsy and too dull of perception, and sentenced to a regular course of medicine.

Now it must be remembered that Mr. M'Kay's taste for natural philosophy had superseded his occupation of chemist and druggist for at least two years ; and that the large stock of pills and mixtures which were then manufactured, had, from the want of patients, remained upon the shelf of his laboratory ever since. The intended reduction, therefore, of Mrs. M'Kay's ponderosity pre-

sented a most delectable opportunity of clearing off these existing insinuations against the skill of their composer ; and though the draughts might happen to be a little fermented, and the pills something allied to the substance of marble, the constitution to which they were to be applied rendered the consideration of such trifles wholly unnecessary. Mrs. M'Kay submitted patiently to the discipline of calomel and black doses, expecting to walk forth from her room with the grace and agility of her niece ; but the remedies had not long been conveyed to their destination before their effects cried out for the assistance of others to counteract them. The whole of Mr. M'Kay's knowledge, and the half of his physic, were brought into action ; the patient, in her own mind, growing worse and worse, and, in his, better and better, till, being scarcely able to leave her room, their

opposite opinions pronounced her, at once, in a dying state and refined feminine health.

In this woeful situation Ardourly beheld the Lady of Brachenshaw, who, seating him by her side, entered fully into the detail of her unprecedented sufferings, which were, without doubt, to put an end to her valuable life, unless he would exert his interest with her husband to obtain for her the care of her own recovery. This was a very arduous point, for, though Mr. M'Kay's medical abilities had slumbered for the space of two years, certain standing regulations had existed in his family ever since, and were, in no wise, to be resisted. The first of these was, that all persons of full habits and florid complexions should abstain from all diet but vegetables, porridge, and rain-water, which, in spite of stench and tadpoles, was collected in a little lake on the house-top, and defended

on the unassailable authority of Celsus himself; so that Mrs. M'Kay's petition for roast beef and port wine promised to share the fate of petitions in general, which are thought very unreasonable till the objects of them are past profiting by their success.

Mr. M'Kay listened to her complaints with his usual grin of satisfaction, and vowed that, so far from adding the beef and port to her bill of fare, he had been hesitating whether, in her particular case, it would not be better to strike out the porridge. As for the objections to the medical treatment, they were totally unfounded, seeing that he had followed, to a grain, the prescription of a very wise physician, who expressly says “*Initio sumat æger pilulam unam pro dosi, mane ac nocte ; postea sumat binas, dein tres et denique augeatur dosis quantum fieri potest.*” To be sure, the doses, like the Battel gun-

powder, had been made triple strong, but they had only been proportionable to her size and constitution, and, therefore, he did not conceive she had any right whatever to be discontented.

There is no knowing how long the altercation might have lasted, had not the spectacles of Mr. M'Kay been directed towards the garden, where they observed the sportive evolutions of a fine crimson moth, flapping his wings from rose to tulip as leisurely as if he had never heard of a naturalist in his life. The old gentleman immediately sounded to arms, and, seizing his butterfly net, rushed out to the chase, followed, before Mrs. M'Kay could pronounce her veto, by Raleigh and Miss Grey.

The Lady of Brachenshaw desired Ardourly would fly to take care of her niece; but, as Miss Colraith was not of the party,

he excused himself on the ground of her being sufficiently protected already ; affording the good aunt, by the manner in which he gazed on the fair Jessie, another excuse for the envy, hatred and malice, she had entertained from the first moment she had beheld her.

Jessie was indeed a most enviable being, for she was the only one at Brachenshaw who was considered fit to be trusted to her own management. Nor was this all the favour she experienced, for the whole of Mr. M'Kay's treasures were committed to her charge, and consequently his whole heart and soul were wrapped up in her. The bride expostulated strongly against the propriety of her exclusion from these nicest cares of her household ; but received no other satisfaction than an assurance that she was quite unfit for them, and had only been made the

mistress of Brachenshaw by an accidental slip in the memory of its master, who had forgotten that it already possessed a much better one. A piece of information which caused an abrupt wheel of the person of the offended party, and the dispersion of a whole festoon of chandelier drops, which had formed the glittering decoration of an old card-table, and now offered an occupation for the innocent cause of dissension.

Ardourly still dwelt upon her singularly sweet countenance, now kindly intent upon repairing her old guardian's baubles, and now listening and replying, with smiling complacency, to whatever the ill-nature of his wife could suggest for her mortification. Was it possible so gentle a creature could merit the unfavourable opinion of any body? Was it possible there could be a mind for clandestine intercourse with a look so seem-

ingly undisguised and innocent ? His purpose was to reveal to her candidly the whole subject of his thoughts ; and, whatever her answer might be, to believe in its truth with unhesitating confidence. But Mrs. M'Kay, unhappily, had eyes to distinguish her beauty, though she wanted the honesty to allow it, and very properly opined that too great an intimacy between them would not tell much in favour of the desired establishment for her niece ; so that the time for bringing to pass the said explanation was very precarious.

In the meanwhile the dinner was announced, and Miss Colraith, leaving the room to summon the fly-catchers, favoured the lady of Brachenshaw with a choice opportunity of ascertaining the precise bent of Ardourly's inclinations.

“ For my part,” said she, “ I do not think

that Miss Colraith half so pretty as some people have described her; and, as for accomplishments, she is not to be named in the same day with my charming Emily—What think you?"

" Why, madam, you have scarcely had time to form a proper judgment. In my mind Miss Colraith is highly accomplished, and a finished beauty."

" La, do you think so! well, some people have one taste, and some another.—She is much too pale for me; and her hair is too black—and—and—in short, she is not one of my beauties at all."

When the cloth was removed the conversation turned upon Raleigh's departure. Satisfied with the assurance of Miss Grey's predilection, he was contented to leave the rest to the fortune of war; convinced, that should he be successful, there would be little

difficulty in effecting a change in the sentiments of the aunt. At present, however, this latter personage did not express any very great share of regret at his approaching loss; which, indeed, was no small ingratitude; for, at the hazard of falling into disgrace with his best friend, the Laird, he had not only supplied her with clandestine bits from his own plate, but had absolutely smuggled down her throat a brimming glass of double-distilled whiskey. Mr. M'Kay was more friendly, and indulged in the patriotic consolation of his mountain spirit, till, as on a former occasion, his various sciences were floated from their lurking places, where the greater part of them had lain forgotten, and danced the Highland-fling upon his brain, with most outrageous confusion.

“ Come lads,” he cried, “ *fiat mixtura* ;

there is nothing like it ; it makes the wit fly edge-ways like the *testa ostrearea*, or shell of an oyster—it nourishes the buds of knowledge like showers in spring, and I'll tell ye a secret—when ye have got your gamut and *sol fas*, you will mix up your tints of yellow ochre and ultra marine (always remembering that the *motacilla* has a long tail, and makes a sound something like *dish-washer*), and—and—then you know you will—where was I? Oh, ay, and then, you know, the child, Jessie, will sing us a song.”

Jessie was aware that the better she sung the worse she would please Mrs. Mackay, and earnestly transferred the task to Miss Grey, who, whispering to the rest, that she meant to have a laugh at her aunt, immediately sang the following words with the most touching sweetness :

The dark weed hangs over our desolate home,
Like a death-pall where honour is closed in the
tomb;

And it seems as it whispered in sighs to the air
All the tale of the woes that have planted it there!

The chill drop that falls from its cold, clammy
wreath—

How deep it hath worn in the stone underneath
So the one ceaseless thought which these ruins
impart

With the chill of despair hath sunk deep in my
heart!

The singer was commended by all; but
Mrs. M'Kay was in raptures. “ What beau-
tiful words, what a delightful air! was it
composed by Handel or Haydn, or Milton
or Shakspeare? I think, Emily, your taste
is much improved of late.”

“ I am very glad of it—I have gained
much instruction from dear Jessie Colraith.”

"Indeed, Miss Colraith is much more likely to be instructed by you. After all the advantages you have had of the first masters, I am sure she will not think of entering into any competition with you."

"Certainly there is no competition between us, and you will say so yourself when I tell you that the composition in which your excellent judgment has united the names of so many worthies, is wholly the work of my sweet Jessie, in compliance with my wishes this morning."

No one delighted more than the Laird of Brachenshaw in the ridicule of his wife; and, he took every occasion to show off her ignorance and narrow-mindedness to the best advantage, perhaps, with the view of teaching her to conceal the former and amend the latter.

"Well my Lady," said he, "how is it to

be? Is Jessie to be a Handel, or are you to be a goose?"

Mrs. M'Kay adjusted herself in her chair, without any decided preference for either of these alternatives.

"Why, I suppose, Mr. M'Kay, a person may be mistaken without being an absolute goose. I do not profess to be so *very* good a judge. I said the music might be rather pretty, but I dare say I was wrong. With Emily's voice it might deceive any one."

Miss Colraith smiled sweetly, and perfectly agreed with her; but Mr. M'Kay followed her up pretty sharply, and it was happy for her that he did not retain the wit of his younger days, or, with such grist for his mill, he had found amusement for the rest of the evening. But he was unable to keep his mind long to one subject; he generally, as he did now, talked himself into a

passion, and then forgot where he was ; the person who undertook to remind him being at full liberty, (that is, without danger of discovery,) to put him upon whatever track he pleased. This successful plan was first discovered by Miss Colraith, who delivered it, like the girdle of Venus, to the new-married lady; and, though little gratitude was shewn for the favour, it proved to be a talisman which often helped her out of very awkward dilemmas. The talisman, however, had considerable difficulties to encounter on the present occasion ; for, as often as she attempted to lead her spouse from the point, Raleigh whispered him back to it, and the joke served as a high treat till the entrance of tea put an end to it.

The hours passed away. Raleigh, as he had determined, had procured a lodging at Brachenshaw for the night, and was to set

out on his return to England in the morning ; but Henry was expected to sleep at Invercraig, and was fearful of causing alarm by remaining. Jessie's distressed countenance pleaded hard for his stay, but he was compelled to resist ; and, after this, it was not likely that his purpose could be changed by Mrs. M'Kay's vehement invitations to a bed, or her horrific descriptions of the dark, stormy night. He pressed the hand of his friend cordially ; said he should feel much anxiety to hear from him, and mounted his horse.

Ardourly had much difficulty in picking his way, for the road was rugged, and the night most dismally dark. The wind howled round him in a hurricane, and the crashes of the old firs, which he passed through to the Dee ford, frequently made his horse start from the beaten track, to the imminent

peril of the rider's neck. The river was so rapid and swollen by the rain which had been pouring for several hours, that both horse and man hesitated as to the safety of crossing. Henry let the animal follow his own inclination, and, after snorting and pawing two or three times at the brink, he brought him over, though his utmost strength was necessary to preserve his footing. He wanted no intimation to use his speed, for the strong and sudden gusts terrified him, wherever the road could be deciphered, into a hard gallop. At length, Ardourly found himself in a thick coppice, about midway between Brachenshaw and Invercraig, and was obliged to slacken his pace, and feel his way cautiously. The night, here, was completely black, and he expected every instant to tumble over the trunk of some ancient pine, prostrated across the road by the vio-

lence of the storm. The creaking of the branches not only startled his horse, but more than once reminded him of the anonymous warnings which could not have been verified in a more fitting place. In a sudden pause of the wind, he heard something stirring on the road, but the storm howled again, and he thought it might be nothing but the straggling cattle which had been browsing there in the day-time. Advancing, however, a few paces further, and thinking how ill-advised he had been to set out so late, a voice on either side electrified him with a mandate to "stand!"

Ardourly would certainly have disobeyed, and done as many a hero had done before him, but the reins of his horse were seized, and he was necessitated to hold a parley.

"Who, and what are you?" he said.

The answer made him feel considerably

more comfortable than he had done a second before; for he recognised the voice of his military acquaintance at Castleton.

"We have met before," said Ardourly, "in this spot; and, when we meet again, I shall have no objection to its being by daylight!"

"Mr. Ardourly!" cried the officer, much surprised, "How, in God's name came you here? Since I have been on this cursed duty, I have undergone more perils than in a twelvemonth's campaign against a French army. The desperation of these smuggling vagabonds is surprising. They are a complete banditti. Here has been robbery and murder in every direction. Last night a cottage was burned because they suspected the owner of giving information against them; and to-night, I have notice, that another in this wood is to share the same

fate, unless we can prevent it. Let me advise you not to be so venturesome again. Upon my soul, you deserved your fright for your temerity. I shall take some of my men, and see you safe home.

They rode together by several small parties of soldiers, whose presence was only intimated by the low, and cautious watch-word, till they cleared the wood; and, pushing their horses till they got within a few furlongs of the castle, whose tower was just then displayed by the rising moon, the officer said he might now wish his friend good night, and return to his post. Ardourly thanked him for his escort, and entered the plantation of firs which flanked the road on either side, for the rest of the way.

It was still dark, except when the driving clouds permitted a moon-beam to dart

through the foliage ; and, as one of these momentarily glanced upon his person, a bullet whistled close to his ear. From the report, the piece was discharged at not many paces. He turned, and beheld three or four men behind him, and, spurring his horse homeward, presently found three or four more in front. There was no choice but to take a small path to the left, which descended to the river, and make the best of his way. The wind sat behind him, and he could distinctly hear he was pursued. There was no tarrying ; and his only chance was to cross the water, which, at that place, was not fordable in the driest season, and was now, perhaps, twice the depth of his horse, and as precipitous as a mill-tail. Fortunately a boat (for the convenience of the inhabitants of the small village of Crathie, about half a mile distant) happened to be on

the right side for him ; and, hastily dismounting, and turning the animal loose, in less than a minute he pulled himself across, by means of a rope fastened on either bank.

He would have run down the water's edge and crossed again, opposite to Invercraig ; but Mr. Ayrton dined that day at the manes of Crathie, and he hastened to prevent his returning without proper protection.

His first question, on his arrival, was, whether the Laird was gone ; and, to his consternation, he was answered in the affirmative. He had been gone about a quarter of an hour, and had left the manse alone, having, probably, crossed the river but a few moments before Ardourly, and taken the by-path to Invercraig, by which there was every chance of his meeting with the ruffians.

The minister was a staunch friend, and had courage enough for a soldier.—“ Sandy —Donald! my pistols and the old claymore! Master Ardourly—the double barrel. We are but four, but there is no time to beat for recruits.”

They were all active young men, and were over the river, and in the fir grove, without giving a thought to the odds they might encounter; but there was no opposition, and they arrived safe at the castle-gate.

Mr. Ayrton had not been home, and Ardourly’s blood curdled with a horrid foreboding. A strong re-inforcement of domestics was speedily collected, armed with fowling-pieces, and whatever they could lay their hands upon; and every path of the plantation was searched, but nothing satisfactory discovered. They tried to listen, but the wind still raged, and drowned every

sound but the shrill neighing of Ardourly's terrified horse, which galloped wildly through the dubious avenues, and was, at last, taken by its master. He immediately vaulted upon it, and, urging his companions, for the love of God, not to give up the search, set off, at full speed, after the officer, who had, unhappily, left him just where his assistance might have prevented the mischief which followed.

"For mercy's sake," he cried, "collect your men and return. I have fallen in with the villains you are expecting." The rest was quickly told.

The night passed in fruitless exertion, and Henry, with his companions, returned in the morning to ascertain the success of the other party, which proved to be no better than his own. Exhausted as he was, both in mind and body, he had a fresh horse

saddled, and again sallied forth to make inquiries at the neighbouring villages. Again he returned unsuccessful, and, no longer doubting the dreadful fate of his kind and benevolent friend, flung himself down to rest, with a throbbing at his head and heart as if both would have burst.

CHAPTER IX.

I marvel all this while where the old gentleman has found means
to secrete himself. It seems no man has heard of him since.—JOHN
WOODVIL—*A Tragedy.*

If that I bear the spirit of a man,
Thou falsely see'st ! Think'st thou I am a beast;
A fanged wolf, reft of all kindly sense,
That I should do such deeds ?

ETHWALD.

THE agitation of mind, with the fatigue
and wet clothes which Ardourly had so long
undergone, caused an illness which kept
him to his bed for some days ; and, during
this time the inquiries and lamentations of
the tenants, and the many who had expe-
rienced the good Laird's bounty, were un-
ceasing. But, though the whole country
testified the greatest sorrow and indigna-

tion for his supposed fate, and the most ardent desire to avenge it, nothing occurred which could, in any way, elucidate the mystery.

The supposition most prevalent was, that the smugglers having seen Henry part from the soldiers by a light which was too imperfect to distinguish his identity, had believed him to be one of them, and endeavoured at a venture to dispossess themselves of an enemy. Having afterwards found his horse, and subsequently met the Laird on foot by the same uncertain light, the murder (if such it was,) might, possibly have been committed under a mistake:

But this was only supposition, and a week passed without any discovery or particular suspicion; when, on looking over the Aberdeen paper for the insertion of the high reward he had offered, to his utter astonish-

ment, Ardourly cast his eyes upon the following passage :—

“ The extraordinary disappearance of Mr. Ayrton of Invercraig, still remains unexplained ; but, it is hinted that suspicion would not be misapplied were it directed towards those whose interests are most concerned in the event.. He is said to have adopted, as his successor, a young gentleman whose situation, if accidental, was peculiarly unfortunate on that mysterious night.”

Ardourly was thunderstruck—“ Gracious heavens,” he exclaimed, “ am I not deceived ? Pointed out as an assassin ! My name made infamous by such a complication of inhuman depravity ! Why did I not listen to the suggestions of my own breast, and timely resist the offer of prospects to which I had no claim ? How much worse than my worst forebodings has been the event ! My compliance has not only afforded

plausible grounds for the insinuations of this scoundrel, but has indeed, (if it is true that my kind friend was mistaken for me,) been the cause of the lamentable catastrophe I am charged with effecting. Why did I not attend to the warning of my secret monitor?"

This recollection shot a chill to his inmost soul.

" If Jessie Colraith was connected with those from whom my life was in danger, must she not be so with the murderers of Invercraig?"

It was a thought which had recurred to his mind every moment in the day, and, though a short time ago, (when no one but himself was concerned,) her single denial of the letters would have amply convinced him, the event which had come to pass was of too fearful a magnitude to warrant a blind ad-

herence to the same confidence. The superposition of an ambitious lover returned with double violence. That Mr. Ayrton might, in the depth of the wood, be mistaken for Ardourly, was not unlikely ; but that there had been any mistake in the first attack upon himself, he could scarcely be brought to allow. The writer to whom he attributed his letters had been divulged to none, and he resolved to say nothing of it, but retain to himself the advantage of observing Miss Colraith's conduct, unguarded by the knowledge of his suspicions. Still, however, an employment so humiliating to both parties was hostile to his disposition, and he determined first to see what could be drawn from her justice and generous feeling. He would send her the paragraph he had just been reading, and, if she proved cruel and infa-

tuated enough to let his character still suffer for the crime of another, it would then be justifiable to adopt the less ingenuous proceeding.

He was interrupted in the arrangement of his plans by the entrance of Kenneth, who saw with alarm, that his handsome face which had become pale from sickness and sorrow, was much flushed and disordered.

“Master Henry,” said his humble, but sympathizing friend, “I hope nothing fresh has happened.”

“No, Kenneth, nothing—I was just wanting you to take this paper to your young lady of Brachenshaw. Deliver it into her own hands, and desire her to read the paragraph I have marked, of which she will be good enough to send me her opinion.”

Kenneth said there would be no need to

carry it far, for he had come to say the Brachenshaw coach was on the road, and would arrive immediately.

“ It is in good time,” said Ardourly ; “ do as I have directed you, and say that I will see them all presently, but that I wish first to be allowed a few minutes’ conversation with Miss Colraith.—Can it be,” he continued when Kenneth was gone, “ that she has determined to make an honourable disclosure, or am I only to see the indefatigable Mrs. M’Kay come with fresh ardour, to her attack upon the newly-elevated heir ?”

He felt extremely nervous at the approaching interview, and the flush which had been raised by indignation had given place to more than his former paleness ; while his hand shook to a degree which scarcely permitted him to open a small desk, from which he drew forth a sealed packet just as Jessie

entered. She held in her hand the paper which Kenneth had given her, but it dropped to the ground when she beheld Ardourly. Both were equally agitated, and both were shocked at the appearance of the other.

"Miss Colraith," said Henry, taking her extended hand, and leading her to a seat, "this is condescending much. There are few who would offer me a hand, as affairs stand *now*. But, perhaps, you have not yet read the discovery in the paper I sent you?" Jessie spoke not. "Will you not oblige me with your opinion, as to its truth or falsehood?"

She had been struggling to master her feelings, but they could be restrained no longer, and she burst into tears. "Have I deserved that you should doubt what my opinion must be? Oh, think better of me!"

"Enough—you believe I am slandered."

He watched her wan and beautiful countenance in trembling expectation of what was to follow ; but she only leant her head upon her hand and wept. It was not likely that, seeing so little of him as she had done, and being acquainted with the late event from the time it took place, her tears could flow so fast for Mr. Ayrton, nor was it probable that her short acquaintance could make her feel so much for Ardourly ; and, therefore, he thought her grief could only be deduced from the guilt of those that were dearer to her. Still he waited in vain for an avowal of this nature, and by degrees essayed, by the simple detail of his distress, to speak more forcibly to her heart. His reputation, he said, was stained with the sacred blood of a benefactor ; his acquaintance was a disgrace to all who partook of it ; his life, henceforth, was only given him to be hooted and ex-

crated. How different from his dreams of retired happiness ! How different from the circle of the fond relations he had left and lost !

Still Jessie shaded her dark eyes, and appeared not to notice what he was saying, except by the quick rising of her bosom.

“ I spoke of my dreams of happiness,” he continued. “ There was one amongst them the sweetest and the deadliest. We have met seldom, but there are those whom we need see but once to love for ever. Forgive me if I speak too bold—the wretched must have license. I loved you, and I thought how we two might roam amongst the wilds to cheer the toil-worn mountaineer, while blessings hallowed the atmosphere around us. But it was a dream, and I had not mentioned it but that it never can be ful-

filled, and better shows the extent of my misery. I ask not whether it might not have been so; enough for me—it cannot; for there are those who, in such a case, would not spare even the lovely Jessie! None would believe but that you participated in the means whereby your husband prospered; and oh, I must change much ere I could bear to hear you spoken of as I shall be!"

As he said this, there was, in his voice, a tone of subdued bitterness which might have been supposed to pierce her deeply had it been addressed to a conscious heart; but her agitation had been so great from the first, that, however his words might have been understood, the effect was imperceptible. It was some minutes before she could sufficiently command her feelings to reply to him, and then the gentleness of every

accent seemed to upbraid him for the thoughts he had entertained. Her sorrow for his illness, her comfort for his distress, her mild assurances that none would listen to the injurious reports of his ill-wishers but those who were beneath his consideration, all assisted to melt his mind to the mood most favourable to her. He saw it was impossible to behold her without dismissing every feeling but admiration and love, and he almost dreaded lest he should reveal the whole of his suspicions, and deprive himself of all future prospect of satisfaction. To keep within bounds, therefore, he came to the business which had been his excuse for desiring a private interview ; and he did it the more readily, because it would afford another appeal to her heart.

“ When I came to Invercraig,” he said, “ I will grant that my great inducement, or

the inducement for the persuasions of my friends, was the invitation to look upon it as my future inheritance. This, perhaps, was bad enough, and, I dare say, our neighbours did not bate one jot of the usual observations on such occurrences; but I was to blame no further. I came with a full assurance that there were none who could urge the superior claims of relationship. I never knew, till the day before I first saw you, that these claims were possessed by Miss Colraith."

Ardourly broke the seal of the packet which lay on the table and desired her to read, which she did, and found that the whole of the Invercraig property was bequeathed to him.

"That will," he said, "our kind friend insisted upon writing in my presence, and delivering into my care; the property it

conveys is committed to my charge as a means of adding to my happiness, and this intention can only be effected by the performance of what I conceive to be just. In default of a will you would have stood in the same situation in which I do by the existence of one ; and, by thus destroying it, I obtain tenfold more satisfaction than I could receive from thrice the possessions of which I divest myself."

He made a motion to tear it, but Miss Colraith started up and seized his arm : " What is it you do ! " she cried, " Think you I will ever consent to profit by such inconsiderate generosity ? No, keep what our poor friend (whom I regret the more for his goodness to you,) keep what it was his wish you should enjoy, and make me happy by seeing you so." Thus saying, she took the will from his hands, and placed

it in the desk from which it had been taken, locked it, and tendered him the keys.

Her behaviour astonished him, and, for the moment, he believed it would be sacrilege to harbour a doubt of such a mind; but he was prevented from acting upon this hasty impulse by the sound of voices approaching the door. They were the tones of Mr. M'Kay and his wife in round argument.

“Mr. M'Kay, I tell you I must see what they are about. It is highly improper for a young lady to be so long closeted with a young gentleman.”

“Mrs. M'Kay, they are doing nothing wrong, and, therefore you can have no satisfaction in peeping.”

But, in a trial of strength, Lady Brachenshaw gained the victory, and burst into the room with a great deal of triumph, and very little ceremony.

" My dear Mr. Ardourly, I am so happy to see you—how very ill you look, but I do not wonder at it after your friend's horrible murder. And then that they should say you did it! I should be afraid of seeing his ghost! Pray, was he shot or was his throat cut?"

" Really, madam, I cannot gratify you—I trust in Providence that we shall still hear of him—he may still live, for we have no positive proofs to the contrary."

" Indeed!" said Mrs. M'Kay, with a face considerably lengthened, " I am very sorry—that is, I am very glad you have hopes.—Do not let me interrupt business, I am sure I must be quite as much interested in your concerns as Miss Colraith, although she *has* occupied so much of your time, and so long impeded our journey to Aberdeen?"

" Are you then on your way to Aberdeen?"

"Yes, to be sure—has not she told you that? I am sure I do not know what she could have been talking about all this while."

By this time, with the assistance of Miss Grey, Mr. M'Kay had hobbled up stairs, and saluted Henry in a much more becoming and feeling manner than his partner had done, though his consolation concluded somewhat ludicrously.

"It is a sad thing," he said, "to die unprepared; I always feared it would be my own case, for I have ever had some new object of inquiry, or some new piece in hand which I did not expect I should live to finish—But I have resolved to seek no further after I have found out the *Papilio Menelaus*, or giant butterfly of Brazil; and to begin no more pictures after I have completed the daft Captain's design of "Death on the Pale Horse," but hold myself in readiness to

jump up behind him—and—and—let me see
—ay—and, as I was saying, we are going
to Aberdeen to see if our conjectures were
right.—”

“ What conjectures, my good Sir?”

“ About your health, papa,” said Miss Colraith, looking full in his face.

“ Ay, ay, about my health, lad. For sea air, is it, Jessie, girl? Come along, we shall have pretty nigh fifty miles to go—there, there; come along, I say, Lady Brachenshaw, and leave the lad alone.”

It was no easy matter to persuade Mrs. M‘Kay to leave the room, and when she was at last dragged off, it was with many assurances that there would always be a bed for Mr. Ardourly at Aberdeen, and that he had better come, or his own throat would certainly be the next to suffer, which would

cause great grief to herself, and break the heart of her niece.

This unexpected visit was a powerful soother to the perturbed mind of our hero, for the melting kindness with which Miss Colraith had come to console him, and the noble rejection of her proper inheritance, which he now hoped he might some day restore by another title, formed a subject of meditation from which his late gloomy prospects arose, as persons are said to have done from the fabled Bath of Beauty, with something of their pristine brilliancy. Yet were the loss of his lamented benefactor, and the injurious reports of his own character, too deeply felt to admit of his exulting in these prospects with the elasticity of an unburthened heart; and he contemplated the future with a sad and oppressive remembrance of the present.

Days and weeks passed, and the Laird's fate still remained unknown. Every post that came brought something to Henry's disadvantage; but though his neighbours began to look shyly upon him, the general sentiment continued to be expressed by neglect only, except in a few instances, where petty malice was allowed the mastery over better feelings.

Yet did not this mistrust prevail amongst the Invercraig peasantry, who could not have loved and honoured him more had he been born their master, and nurtured in their native hills.

He visited them, and attended to their wants with the same goodness of heart they had been used to, and could not have acted more conformably to the system of the late Laird, had he expected him to return to see how his affairs had been conducted. But with

all this domestic attachment to his person, Henry did not find his situation acquire a proportionable degree of tranquillity ; though fond of retirement he was not formed for solitude, and there was no friend in his own sphere to banish it. He looked on the pathless mountains, bleak, brown, and desolate, in the dreary commencement of a long winter, and sighed to feel himself a single stranger far from all who could take a natural interest in him ; enclosed in a country which was thinly inhabited, and those inhabitants, for the most part, hostile to him and compelled to admit the justness of his warnings by the necessity of taking precautions for his safety.

As nothing, since he had acquitted Jessie, occurred to alter his suspicion of the smugglers, his inquiries were principally confined to them ; for they made no secret of

their calling, but only of the outrages incident to it, and the whole of them in that part of the hills were, by the assistance of Kenneth, shortly known to him ; but in vain did he venture his person in the hovels of illegal traffic, and in vain seek for the grand confidant and assistant in their mal-practices, the trust-worthy Kitty Rankie, or her invisible son. Sometimes he resolved to look for a comforter at Aberdeen, but again he thought that whilst there was a chance of information he was in duty bound to remain at Invercraig, where he wandered about the castle in grief, discontent, and daily disappointment.

His only amusement was to encourage the simple muse of Kenneth, and speak to him of Jessie Colraith. It was a theme that both were fond of. She had not only fostered the young poet's genius, and rewarded it

with the praise he most loved to listen to, but had comforted and made easy the latter days of two distressed parents. Kenneth felt with the susceptibility of a poetic heart. He loved his sweet patroness, but it was with a feeling as humble as it was hopeless, and pure as a younger sister of religion herself. He only loved to be where she had been, to preserve the flower which had been crushed by her slender foot, and bathe his temples in the wave which had reflected her features. To see her pale countenance catch a beam from the happy faces which had been lighted up by her goodness, and one leaf from the wilding branch of his poesy, wafted on the breath which hailed her bridal day.

Next to Jessie he loved his young master. He saw him lonely and sad, and he brooded on the only means which could complete

their happiness, with an enthusiastic belief that they were both too good for any but each other. To have looked forward to the marriage of Jessie with any one else would, perhaps, have cost poor Kenneth more bitter moments than he dared own to himself ; but when he gained courage to mention the present likelihood, it was with an untroubled brow, and a heart most anxious for its accomplishment.

The subject was canvassed often, and the companions liked each other better as they became further acquainted with their mutual liking for Jessie. The objections which Ardourly adduced from the cruel rumours against his own name were combated with all the arguments which could be suggested by an earnest desire of success ; and, by degrees, gave way, till his hesitating mind consented to follow the dictates of his

heart, and a day was really fixed for trying his fortune at Aberdeen.

As he mounted his horse he pressed the hand of his humble friend with a true sense of his value, while Kenneth followed him with the fondest wishes of his heart, and the best eloquence of his Muse.

And thou art gone! thy mountain tower,
Is lone and lifeless now—
More bleakly drives the winter shower,
More dreary drifts the snow.

The wild wind o'er my head doth hiss,
The only voice I hear,
But, while it wafts thee on to bliss,
I seek no other cheer.

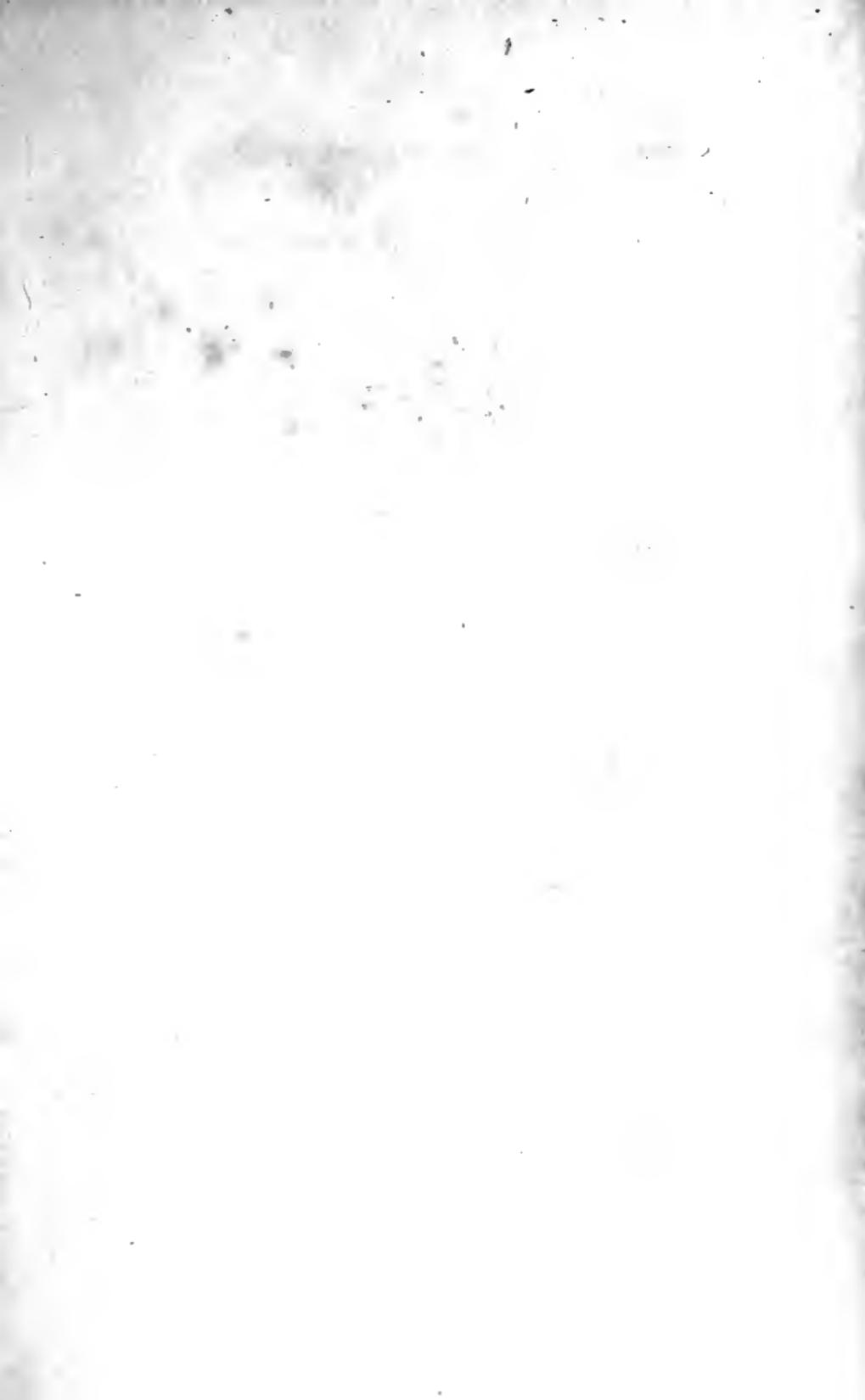
Oh lovely are the lips that breathed
The poet's early lays,
And gentle is the hand that wreath'd
His brow with early bays.

For ever may they lead thee o'er
Where moments gaily bloom,
While every one is brighten'd more
By hopes of more to come.

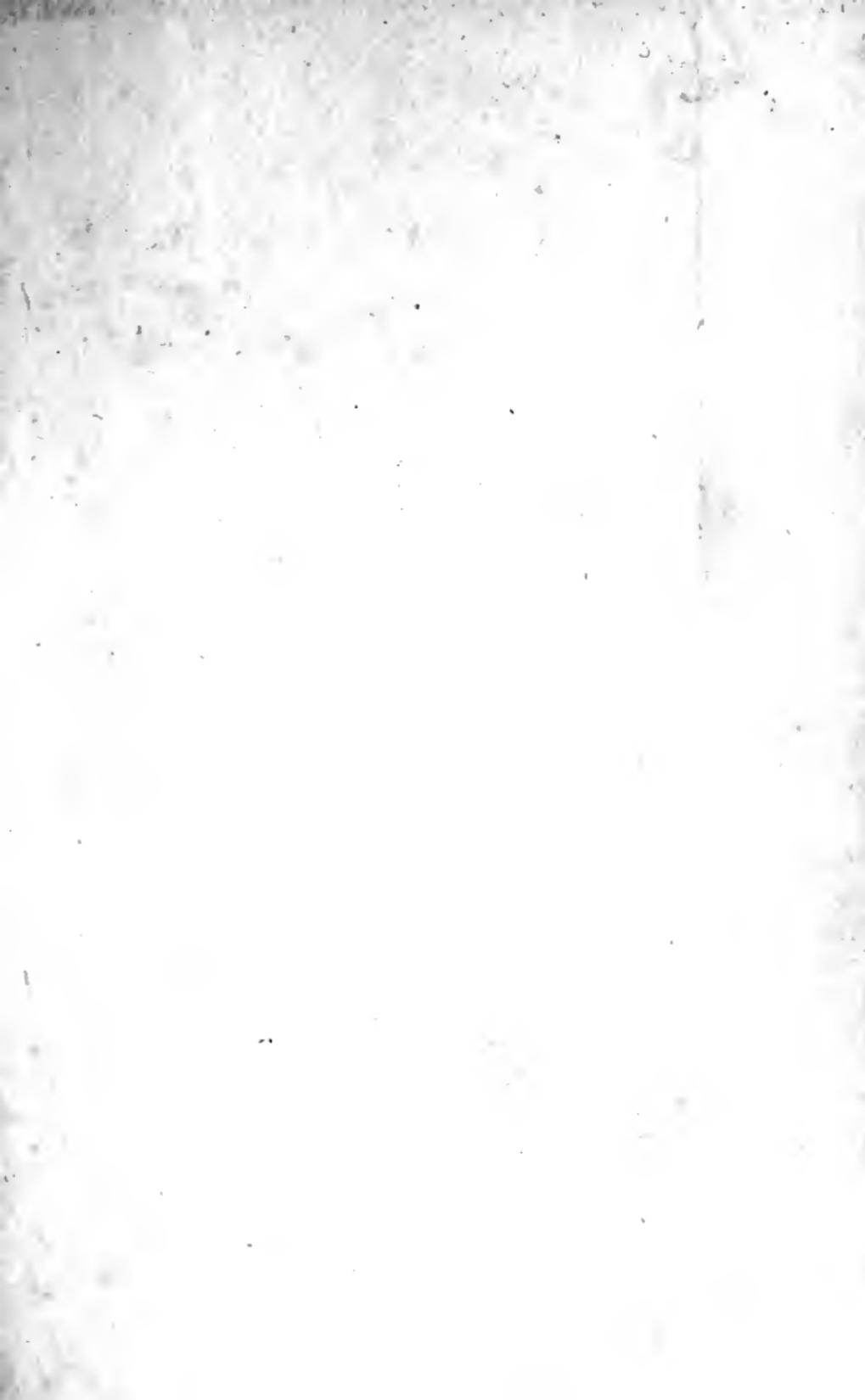
For me no other joy I'd share,
Than twine her name with thine—
A chaplet ever sweet and fair
That pays her back for mine.

END OF VOL. I.

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